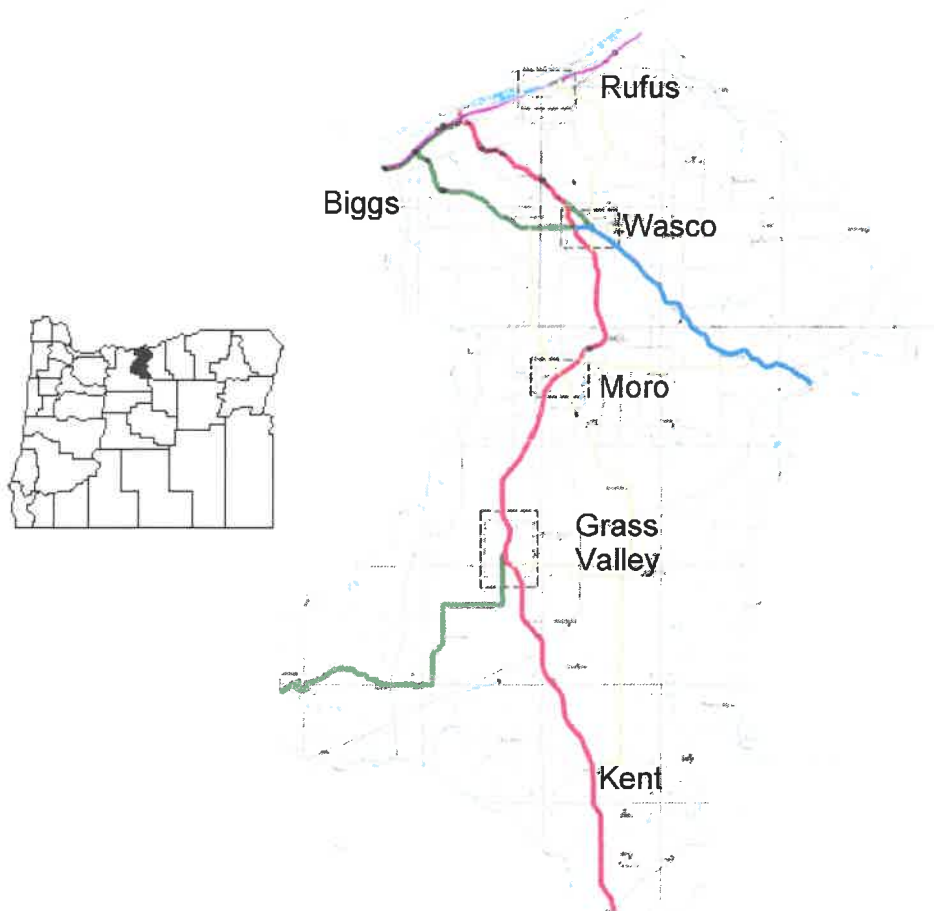


SHERMAN COUNTY COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Sherman County, Oregon

2016 – 2019



Prepared by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

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Executive Summary

The Sherman County Coordinated Transportation Plan was prepared by Mid-Columbia Economic Development District to meet the state and federal requirements for Special Transportation Fund (STF) agencies. It focuses on addressing the transportation needs of three target populations residing in Sherman County: seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low income individuals. The transportation plan looks at gaps in services and prioritizes needs to assist in:

- improving transportation services for the target populations by identifying opportunities to coordinate existing resources;
- providing a strategy to guide investment of financial resources; and
- guiding the acquisition of future funds and grants.

This document serves as an update to the 2009-2012 with 2013 Addendum Sherman County Coordinated Transportation Plan. Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, under contract with Hood River County Transportation District STF Agency/ODOT prepared this plan update. It was updated using information collected from the previous coordinated transportation plans and Addendum, the North Central Region AOC/ODOT Pilot Project focusing on the needs of Limited English Proficiency individuals in Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties (2016), data from new surveys and outreach efforts, and new demographic and service resource analysis.

The coordinated transportation plan is intended to define and prioritize general strategies that the transit service providers can use to develop specific projects. High priority strategies to address gaps and barriers, as prioritized by the Sherman County STF committee, fell under five categories:

- Sustain existing transportation services:
 - Maintain dial-a-ride operations.
 - Maintain shopping transportation service to The Dalles. Regularly review service schedule to ensure target audience population needs are being met.
 - Continue partnership with Veteran's Administration to coordinate service for Veterans' transportation to VA and VA-approved medical facilities.
- Operations:
 - Fleet Management:
 - Provide for replacement of vehicles that have exceeded their useful life.
 - Provide funding for vehicle repair and preventative maintenance.
 - Seek funding for additional vehicles required for any service expansion.
 - Seek funding for expansion of bus barn or for covered structure to protect the fleet.
 - Address the growing length of the return shopping trip with modifications to the service.
 - Maintain current fare system of suggested donation.
- Service expansion: Explore options to provide more Medicare client transportation such as group trips. Determine and pursue potential funding streams.
- Outreach to Human Service Agency Staff: Conduct regular outreach to human services providers to educate on the transportation services available.
- Planning and coordination: Continue participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance.

Performance measures linked to the above strategies were created to help the public transportation provider assess how it is meeting these strategies over time. This plan is intended to be updated every three years, or as conditions change.

Introduction

Federal and State Requirements

The State of Oregon requires Special Transportation Fund (STF) agencies to prepare a coordinated transportation plan to guide the investment of STF moneys. The State directs that this plan be utilized to maximize the benefit to the elderly and people with disabilities within that area. Correspondingly, with the passage of the Federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) transportation authorization, Congress required a “locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” intended to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, individuals who are elderly, and individuals with lower incomes. This Coordinated Transportation Plan meets both federal and state requirements for preparation and adoption of a coordinated plan.

Plan Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the plan is to meet federal and state requirements and to provide a framework for the public transportation provider and the STF agency to maximize transportation investments to assist the target populations: seniors, individuals with disabilities and individuals with low incomes. It covers a three year timeframe (2016-2019) and is intended to be updated at least every three years or as conditions change.

Sherman County is the area covered by this plan and coordination is developing with Gilliam, Wheeler and Wasco counties that geographically abut Sherman County and have similar needs, operations, populations and challenges.

Planning Area

The planning area covered under this coordinated transportation plan is Sherman County, Oregon. Sherman County is 823.69 square miles in area, approximately 20 miles wide east to west, and 42 miles long, north to south, with a population of 1,765 residents (2.1 citizens per square mile)¹. Incorporated cities are Wasco, Moro (County seat), Grass Valley and Rufus. Biggs Junction is recognized as an unincorporated community. Major transportation corridors are US 97 running north and south which bisects the County, and Interstate 84 which runs along the northern boundary of the County parallel to the Columbia River. US 97 provides good access to the Bend area (118 miles, 2 ½ hours south), and Interstate 84 provides easy travel to Pendleton (123 miles, 2 hours east), The Dalles (38 miles, 40 minutes west) and Portland (121 miles, 2 hours west).

¹ 2010 U. S. Census

Planning Process: 2016-2019

Stakeholder Identification and Consultation Process

Stakeholders include the target populations, agencies with significant contact with the special needs populations, and entities providing transportation services. Stakeholders include public transportation providers, human service agencies, community organizations, medical facilities and the public. Stakeholders were involved in identifying needs of the target populations and the County, the transportation resources available, and strategies to address transportation needs. Information was gathered through stakeholder interviews, public meetings, surveys, and involvement with the Special Transportation Fund (STF) committees.

A one-on-one interview was held with the public transportation provider, Sherman County Community Transit. Additionally and meetings were held with the STF Advisory Committee to solicit their input. Area stakeholders participated in a meeting of Human Services Agencies' representatives and public transportation providers to discuss the extensive survey results and potential for service enhancements and improved coordination. The approach to the surveys conducted for stakeholder input is covered in the Public Process section.

List of Stakeholders

The following stakeholders participated in the extensive survey process and also were invited to participate in the stakeholder meetings and /or serve on the small working group in order to gather information on transportation needs, services, gaps, and solutions:

- **Sherman County Community Transit (SCCT).** The public transportation service is operated by the Sherman County Court to provide local Dial-a-Ride transportation in Sherman County and to coordinate other transportation programs in the region. SCCT participates in the Medicaid Brokerage administrated by the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments. It is also the recipient of a Highly Rural Transportation Grant to improve transportation to VA or VA authorized medical facilities for Sherman County Veterans. *Serves public transportation users including seniors, disabled and low-income clients.*
- **Area Agency on Aging.** A division of Mid-Columbia Council of Governments, assisting seniors (age 60+), including those with disabilities and/or low income.
- **Sherman County Senior Center.** Sherman County Senior & Community Center offers a central site for social, recreational, health & wellness, educational, and nutritional services and programs. *Serves seniors, disabled, low income individuals.*
- **Eastern Oregon Center for Independent Living (EOCIL):** Promotes independent living and equal access for all persons with disabilities. *Serves those with disabilities.*
- **North Central Public Health District:** Health care provider. *Serves senior, disabled and low-income populations.*
- **Mid-Columbia Center for Living:** Focuses on behavioral and mental health and substance abuse services. *Serves senior, disabled and low income populations.*
- **Mid-Columbia Community Action Council:** Promotes self-sufficiency in families and individuals within the low-income economic range. *Serves low-income clients, including seniors.*
- **Mid-Columbia Housing Authority:** Provides safe and affordable housing for low income families in Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Skamania and Klickitat Counties. *Serves senior populations, persons with disabilities on fixed income and low-income individuals.*

- **One Community Health:** A Federally Qualified Health Center. *Serves senior, disabled and low-income populations.*
- **Oregon Department of Human Services. Self-Sufficiency.** Offers help with food benefits (SNAP), Cash for families (TANF), Child care assistance, Refugee services. *Serves low-income and Limited English Proficiency populations.*
- **Oregon Department of Human Services. Seniors and People with Disabilities.** Services are designed to protect a person's individual independence, dignity and choice. *Serves seniors, people with physical disabilities and Limited English Proficiency Individuals.*
- **Oregon Department of Human Services. Vocational Rehabilitation.** Assists individuals with disabilities in obtaining and keeping a job. *Serves people with disabilities.*
- **Veterans Services, Sherman County:** Serves all Veterans living in Sherman County including *seniors, disabled, low income individuals.*

Public Meetings

Public meetings were held on the following dates for the 2016-19 plan update:

- December 2, 2015, STF Advisory Committee and Sherman County Court, Moro.
- March 23, 2016 Senior Meal Site, Sherman County Senior & Community Center, Moro.
- April 18, 2016 Pioneer Potlatch, Wasco.
- August 16, 2016, STF Advisory Committee, Sherman County Senior & Community Center, Moro.
- September 27, 2016, STF Advisory Committee, Sherman County Senior & Community Center, Moro.
- October 5, 2016, Sherman County Court, Moro.

Public Process

An important part of ascertaining the target population's input as well as garnering participation from the general public into the Coordinated Transportation plan update involved a comprehensive survey process from March 28 through April 8th. The survey tools used to inform the plan can be found in Appendix A and highlights from the results in Appendix B.

From the list of stakeholders above, the following targeted groups were surveyed via both electronic and paper methods:

- Human Services Agency staff – 5 surveys completed, primarily electronically
- Human Services Agency clients – 32 surveys completed; Human Services agency staff administered the paper survey to their clients who live in Sherman County. Paper surveys were also administered in person by the Project Manager at the Area Agency on Aging's Senior Meal site at the Sherman County Senior & Community Center in Moro on March 23, 2016 and at the Pioneer Potlatch meal site on April 18, 2016 in Wasco. Individual conversations allowed seniors who could not write or read an opportunity to respond.
- Members of the public were invited to participate via an announcement in the Sherman County eNews published by Sherry Kaseberg. The news release, found in Appendix C, offered both a paper and an online option for the public to complete the survey. The paper surveys were available at the Sherman County Public/School Library in Moro.
- Furthermore, an electronic survey option was also offered to the public through an announcement in MCEDD's monthly eNewsletter with a link to the survey from MCEDD's website and its Facebook Page as well as an announcement and link from the Gorge TransLink Alliance website. Information on how to access the survey was shared with the Community Advisory Council of the Columbia Gorge Health Council at their March 28, 2016 meeting and through email to community partners requesting their assistance to share it with the public. In

all, a total of 35 surveys were completed by the public.

- Riders of Sherman County Community Transit participated in an onboard paper survey which was offered from February 1 – April 8, 2016 resulting in 9 responses.

Overall, a total of 81 print and electronic surveys were completed.

Data Analysis

Sherman County

Sherman County, established in 1889, is home to four incorporated cities:

- Wasco (population 410)
- Moro (population 324)
- Rufus (population 249)
- Grass Valley (population 164)

In addition to its cities, Sherman County also has one census-designated place (CDP) with a small population concentration:

- Biggs Junction (population 22)²

Moro is the County Seat and the second largest population center in the County. As the County Seat it serves as a hub for county government, education, human services and transportation. *The economy is based upon wheat, barley, cattle and tourism.*³

With a population of 2.1 persons for every square mile, isolated rural roads, long travel distances and inclement weather present a unique challenge in Sherman County for seniors, low income individuals and those with disabilities who must travel outside the county for most essential services such as medical care, social and legal services, shopping and higher education. Special needs individuals without adequate transportation face the issue of social interaction. The nearest commerce hub is located in The Dalles where most medical, senior and social services are found along with federal offices, places of employment, diverse shopping opportunities and various education services. The Dalles is 38 miles from the Sherman County Seat (Moro) – an approximately 40 minute drive and is accessible by US Highway 97 and Interstate 84.

Demographics

Planning for special transportation services is contingent upon the need for the service, thus understanding County population demographics and future population projections are important. Data from the American Community Survey 2015 estimates were used to provide a fuller snapshot of Sherman County's special needs populations, which indicates:

Population Estimates	Sherman County	Oregon
Total population ⁴	1,680	4,028,977
Percentage of population 65 years and over ⁵	25%	16.4%
Percentage of individuals with disabilities ⁶	19.9%	14.2
Percentage of individuals living below the poverty level in last 12 months. ⁷	19.4%	16.7%
Percentage of Hispanic or Latino individuals ⁸	6.8%	12.7%

² U.S. Census, 2010 Census

³ Quality Info <http://bit.ly/23tFKY1>

⁴ US Census American QuickFacts ACS 2015 Estimates

⁵ US Census American QuickFacts ACS 2015 Estimates

⁶ US Census American Fact Finder

⁷ US Census American Fact Finder

⁸ US Census American QuickFacts ACS 2015 Estimates

Percentage of individuals who speak a language other than English at home, age 5+ ⁹	2.8%	14.9%
Mean travel time to work in minutes for workers 16 years and over ¹⁰	21.3 min.	22.7 min.

Since the previous 2009-2012 with 2013 Addendum Sherman County Coordinated Transportation Plan, much of Sherman County's special needs populations continue to increase with the exception of a *slight* decline of 0.6% of individuals living below the poverty line. Even so, with a poverty rate of 19.4%, Sherman County still remains above the State poverty rate of 16.7%. The overall number of Sherman County disabled individuals has increased by 3.1% to 19.9% since the last Plan update, with fully 39.5% of the disabled reported to be age 65 and over. Sherman County has a high rate of seniors age 65 and over, as a striking 25%, or 1 in 4 individuals, living in the county fit this description. This aging population trend mirrors what is happening within Oregon, and indeed, across the country, as Baby Boomers reach retirement age in record numbers. An older and increasingly disabled Sherman County population will put significant demands on transportation resources such as the need for ADA accessible vehicles in good repair, timely replacement of vehicles and an increase in capacity to transport more individuals who need transportation help.

An Association of Oregon Counties Pilot Project study completed in January 2016 confirmed the number of Limited English Proficiency individuals in the County is extremely small. As noted in the ACS data above, less than 3% of Sherman County individuals speak a language other than English at home. Because Sherman County's results for the pilot project were unremarkable, they are not included in this Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.

Mean travel time to work increased by 3 minutes to 21.3 minutes, so residents are spending a bit more time in their car to reach their place of employment.

Population Estimates

In addition to the various U.S. Census Data ACS 2015 estimates noted above, recent population data is also available the State of Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis. Demographic trends for population projections for the years 2020-2050 are available from the State's Office of Economic Analysis and are detailed in the tables of Appendix D. Sherman County's total population is projected to decline slightly through 2025 and then begin to experience small growth. A fairly stable total population that is aging and more proportionately disabled will put additional demands on the county's public transportation system.

As noted above, the expected population changes will intensify stresses on the county's public transportation system, requiring more responsive services, well-maintained vehicles in good repair, and timely replacement vehicles to meet the needs of a larger and more complex transit dependent population. Many seniors rely upon public transportation for frequent medical appointments and to safely meet the necessities of life such as access to shopping for food and medicines. Wheelchair-accessible public transportation service must be provided for elderly seniors and those with disabilities. Given the remote nature of Sherman County, reliable public transportation is key in helping to meet the needs of the target populations.

⁹ US Census American QuickFacts ACS 2015 Estimates

¹⁰ US Census American QuickFacts ACS 2015 Estimates

Income and Employment Data

Average wage per job in Sherman County in 2015 was \$ 43,791.¹¹ In 2014, Sherman County had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$58,011. This PCPI ranked 1st in the state and was 141 percent of the state average of \$41,220, and 126 percent of the national average, \$46,049. The 2014 PCPI reflected an increase of 2.5 percent from 2013.¹²

Sherman County's 2015 annual unemployment rate was 6.3 compared to 5.7 for Oregon.¹³ While employment continues to rebound since the great recession its effects are slower than the state average for Sherman County.

Statistically, 19.4% of the county population lives below the poverty level – almost 1 in 5. Public transportation is crucial to those who most need access to jobs, education, groceries, medical care and social services. Without reliable transportation, some individuals are, in every sense of the word, stranded.

In the past year, fuel prices have dramatically declined resulting in cost savings to the public transportation service provider. Gas may be cheap, but some low income individuals still may not be able to afford to purchase or maintain a car. Or a low income family may only have one vehicle for multiple transportation needs. In addition to medical, social services, and shopping trips, rural public transportation is an important link to vital destinations such as workplaces for those on limited incomes, including many seniors and those with disabilities.

A 2009 – 2013 analysis of commuting patterns by the State of Oregon Employment Office, shown in Appendix E, shows a shared labor market inside and outside the Columbia River Gorge. While a majority of Sherman County workers are employed within the county, those who are not travel most frequently to Wasco County and secondly to Klickitat County. During the public survey process, people shared that transportation to work is a need for those residing in the County. This need to travel outside the County for employment is illustrative of the interconnectivity of the region's economies and it supports the need for greater interconnected regional public transportation.

¹¹ State of Oregon Employment Dept. Quality Info

¹² U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

¹³ State of Oregon Employment Dept Quality Info

Common Origins and Destinations

Origins

The primary origins for transportation requests in Sherman County are the incorporated cities of Moro, Wasco, Grass Valley and Rufus. A map showing common origins can be found in Appendix F.

Destinations

The Dalles is the region's economic center and where most medical services, human service agencies, federal offices, shopping and education services are located. As such, it is often the primary destination for Sherman County residents. Primary destinations in The Dalles include:

- Medical Care: Mid-Columbia Medical Center, Outpatient Clinics, Waters Edge, One Community Health
- Shopping: Safeway, Fred Meyer, Cascade Square (Grocery Outlet), K-Mart and Bi-Mart
- Human & Social Service Offices
- Social Security Office
- Work

In addition to The Dalles, Portland is a significant transportation destination by Sherman County special needs populations, with trips for medical care cited most often. The Portland VA Medical Center along with OHSU are primary locations for specialty medical care. With a growing disabled senior population, the need for specialty medical care not available in the region is likely to grow, thereby increasing the importance of dependable public transportation to Portland.

Maps showing common destinations can be found in Appendix F.

Changing Conditions

The most pressing concern is the declining population in Sherman County. As the population declines, the numbers of senior citizens increases as do the number of older adults with disabilities. This will put more pressure on the public transportation provider to meet the county's senior, disabled and low income populations' transportation needs. Well maintained, ADA accessible vehicles and timely replacement of vehicles that have exceeded their useful life are of primary importance in order to ensure the safe and reliable transport of Sherman County special needs population. The ability to expand the fleet and add staff is also critical to address a growing capacity need as is the ability to safely and securely house their fleet. In regards to their fleet, Sherman County Community Transit has more vehicles than it has bays in its fleet's garage. Furthermore, some of its vehicles are longer than the size of the bays so they do not fit within the existing structure. A bus barn building expansion or a covered structure similar to an RV carport steel building is needed to protect the fleet from the elements and securely store the County's transit vehicles.

Transportation Resource Analysis

Transportation Service Options

Characteristic of its status as a frontier county, there is only one public transportation provider serving seniors, those with disabilities and individuals with low income in Sherman County: Sherman County Community Transit. Sherman County Community Transit service offers a lifeline to county residents, particularly to its special needs populations, who may be isolated by the magnificent and vast geography of this area. Sherman County Community Transit's characteristics are described below.

Sherman County Community Transit (SCCT)

SCCT is the main public transportation provider for Sherman County.

Service Area/Hours

Publicly, Sherman County Community Transit offers Dial-a-Ride, door-to-door service from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday throughout Sherman County. In reality, the service operates from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday - Friday depending upon the client's destination. Sherman County Community Transit also offers twice weekly bus service to The Dalles on Mondays and Thursdays for medical, dental, business and light shopping. Non-narcotic prescription pickups are also available upon request. The bus leaves Kent at 7:15am with stops in Grass Valley, Moro, Wasco, Rufus and Biggs. Arrangements are made by calling the Transit Coordinator one day ahead to pick up riders at their residences anywhere in the County.

Sherman County Community Transit also serves as a Medicaid Transporter in the Sherman County area. Initial ride screening is done by the Mid-Columbia Council of Governments' (MCCOG) Medicaid Brokerage and then appropriate requests are referred to Sherman County Community Transit for scheduling and fulfillment.

Additionally, under a Veterans Affairs Highly Rural Grant, Sherman County Community Transit has expanded its transportation services to Veterans. The grant funds Sherman County Veterans transportation to needed VA medical center or VA-approved medical appointments in Portland as well as other VA care centers in the region.

Fares

The dial-a-ride service fare is a suggested donation, which may vary depending upon the destination.

The twice weekly bus service to The Dalles on Mondays and Thursdays is a suggested donation of \$2.50 one way or \$5.00 round trip.

Funding

Sherman County Community Transit is operated by the Sherman County Court and is managed by a Transit Coordinator who also serves as the County Treasurer. In addition to financial support from the County, operational costs for Sherman County Community Transit services are covered through:

- Federal Transit Administration Funds 5310 & 5310 Discretionary
- Special Transportation Fund Discretionary

- Contract for services, e.g. MCCOG for Medicaid Transport
- Donations (suggestion \$5 for The Dalles bus)
- VA Highly Rural Veterans Grant Funds

Financial support is a lifeline to providing the County's special needs populations access transportation services at a minimal cost.

Administration

Sherman County Community Transit is managed by a Coordinator who also serves as the County Treasurer. The Transit Coordinator/County Treasurer reports to the three member Sherman County Court. The Transit Coordinator also works with the Sherman County STF Committee, which helps to oversee the transit services to seniors, those with disabilities, and low income individuals in the County.

Issues with Major Intercity Transportation Providers

Greyhound

Greyhound is a private intercity bus transportation provider offering service along the I-84 corridor to Portland (westbound) and Pendleton (eastbound). The bus stops in The Dalles, about 39 miles from Moro, the county seat, and also one of the county's population centers. The difficulty for would-be travelers in Sherman County with using this transportation service is getting to and from the Greyhound bus stop in The Dalles. Greyhound operates limited service along I-84 but the nearest stops from Biggs Junction, which sits on the I-84 corridor, are The Dalles (20 miles west) and Pendleton (120 miles east). US 97 cuts through Sherman County and is the major North/South road in the County. Still, the nearest Greyhound stop to the south is located in Bend (130 miles south).

Amtrak

Amtrak, the national railroad system, provides passenger rail service on the Washington side of the Columbia River. A train station is located in Wishram, Washington, which is approximately 11 miles from Biggs Junction, the closest point in Sherman County. The Amtrak service runs two routes per day, a westbound stop at 7:30am and a 6:55pm northeast bound stop. It is possible to ride Amtrak into Portland and back the same day, with the westbound train leaving Wishram at 7:30am and the return train arriving at 6:55pm. The roundtrip ride is about 2 hours and 40 minutes. The difficulty with this transportation service for Sherman County travelers is *getting to and from* the Wishram train station as there is no reliable public transportation.

Inventory

Fleet Inventory for Sherman County

Operator	Model/ Year	Mileage Estimate	ADA Accessible	Remaining Useful Life (Years)	Seating Capacity
Sherman County Community Transit	2000 Ford E-450	123,799	Yes	2	21+1
Sherman County Community Transit	2009 Ford F450	51,443	Yes	4	13+2

Sherman County Community Transit	2011 Dodge Grand Caravan	46,141	Yes	3	5+2 or 4 +2
Sherman County Community Transit	2011 Chevy Tahoe	92,841	No	3	8
Sherman County Community Transit	2013 Ford E350	9,405	Yes	4	6+1
Sherman County Community Transit	2014 Ford E350	7,192	No	4	10
Sherman County Community Transit	2015 Ford Explorer	18,611	No	4	7
Sherman County Community Transit	2015 Ford Escape	14,081	No	4	5

Building Inventory for Sherman County

Operator	Description	Date Constructed	Holds # vehicles
Sherman County Community Transit	Bus Barn	2006	6

A bus barn building expansion is needed in order to accommodate their expanded fleet of 8 vehicles since the current building only holds 6 vehicles. Some of their vehicles exceed the length that can be housed in the existing bus barn structure, so they do not fit inside. A bus barn building expansion or a covered structure similar to an RV carport steel building is needed to protect the fleet from the elements and securely store the County's vital transit vehicles. As service expansion occurs, additional vehicles will be required and storage for these new vehicles will also be needed.

Coordination

Sherman County Community Transit is the only public transit provider offering services throughout the County. It is also one of the Medicaid Brokerage transportation providers serving fourteen counties in central and eastern Oregon.

Sherman County enjoys a well-established level of coordination between the area's transportation providers through its participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance, a bi-state coalition of five county's transportation providers, state transportation officials and local agency partners in the Mid-Columbia region. The Alliance is facilitated by MCEDD's mobility manager. This individual works closely with Alliance members and other partners to consider local and regional transportation services, service gaps, costs, funding needs, available funding streams, innovative and appropriate technology with an eye for opportunities of potential collaboration and coordination.

To help promote existing transportation services, MCEDD's Mobility Manager conducts community outreach to area organizations serving the needs of vulnerable and special needs populations, as well as to employers and the general public. Regular meetings of the Gorge TransLink Alliance, arranged and facilitated by the mobility manager, aid communication and build partnership thus fostering an environment where regional transportation concerns can be addressed. The Mobility Manager

position is grant-funded. Gorge TransLink Alliance members support the mobility manager position through agency resolutions and Memorandums of Understanding, along with match and in-kind assistance.

Finally, Sherman County Community Transit receives support from the Veteran's Administration in coordinating transportation services to VA medical facilities or VA approved facilities through a Highly Rural Veterans Grant. Veterans schedule rides directly with Sherman County Community Transit.

Transportation Funding Resources

State and Federal Funding for Transportation Services

The following resources are state and federal resources designed to support transportation for seniors, those with disabilities and low income individuals:

- Section 5310 & 5310 Discretionary: Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance. Federal funding source designed specifically to meet elderly and disabled individuals' transportation requirements. Administered by states and available through the State of Oregon through the discretionary grant process.
- Section 5311: Rural Transit Assistance. Federal funding source designed to support rural transportation operations. Administered by states and available through the State of Oregon through a formula process.
- Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation. Provides funding, administered by the state's Coordinated Care Organizations, provides funding for eligible client transportation to and from medical services that are both medically necessary and covered by Medicaid.
- Non-Medical Medicaid resources for the developmentally disabled.
- Special Transportation Fund. State funding source distributed both by formula and through the discretionary application process.
- Veteran's Administration. Highly Rural Transportation Grants (HRTG). This grant-based program helps Veterans in highly rural areas travel to VA or VA-authorized health care facilities. The program provides grant funding to Veteran Service Organizations and State Veterans Service Agencies to provide transportation services in eligible counties. The program in Oregon is administered by the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. Sherman County qualifies for this program.
- *ConnectOregon*. State funding source which is a lottery-backed bond initiative designed to invest in air, rail, marine, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure to ensure a strong Oregon transportation system. Discretionary grant program.
- Federal Highway Administration. Federal Lands Access Program. Competitive grant program designed to provide safe and adequate transportation access to and through Federal Lands for visitors, recreationists, and resource users.

Needs Assessment

Barriers

Identified barriers to fully meeting transportation needs are described below:

- The highly rural nature of Sherman County with a disseminated population as noted in the population data presented in this plan update and illustrated in Appendix E. Considered a “frontier” county, the dispersed Sherman County population necessitates extended travel for dial-a-ride services in order to meet the needs of the target population. These extra miles increase the cost of service provision, which includes extra wear and tear on the vehicles. It also makes for very long day for drivers.
- There is a shortage of drivers. Sherman County Community Transit drivers are paid, yet they do not currently have enough drivers to meet their growing service demands.
- The existing transportation provider has limited capacity. There is a high demand for transportation services along with the desire for additional service as noted across all stakeholder groups, including transportation to social outings, which are a real service to the target population which may be isolated by geography. Sherman County Community Transit is limited in the number of vehicles and drivers available to provide the desired transportation services.
- Available funding is limited. In addition to a limited number of drivers and vehicles, there are also limited operational funds to provide for all of the public transportation services requested by Sherman County residents.
- There are gaps in the locations of where Sherman County Community Transit can transport individuals. Some destinations requested but not serviced because of current funding restrictions are: the County Court for tickets and visits to the Parole Office. While Medicaid transportation is fully funded, Medicare transportation is not. There are many Medicare clients in Sherman County who need transportation to their medical appointment but are not transported because of funding restrictions.
- Human service agency staff requested more information about the available transportation services, including who is eligible and how to access them for their Sherman County clients.

Improving Coordination

Overlap/Duplication of Services

Sherman County has one primary public transportation service provider: Sherman County Community Transit, so there is no duplication of services.

Opportunities for Coordination

Opportunities exist to better coordinate transportation with regional providers to benefit Sherman County’s seniors, those with disabilities and low income population. For example, perhaps some type of collaborative approach with Mt. Adams Transportation Service could make service to Wishram possible in order to facilitate access to Amtrak. Connecting with The Link and CAT for service to Portland for access to the OHSU and VA medical campuses, as well as other destinations, e.g. PDX, via CAT’s Gateway Transit Center stop is another opportunity to explore.

Capital Equipment

The vehicle fleet inventory indicates Sherman County has some aging vehicles. Transport over very rural roads (gravel and dirt) and inclement weather conditions ages these vehicles more than mileage alone would indicate as does storing them outside in the elements. Timely and appropriate vehicle replacement is critical to maintaining operations. Preventative maintenance and repair is also necessary to ensure that current vehicles can continue to be safely and dependably used. Attention to the fleet is vital to maintaining current service levels for the target populations. In order to expand service, the purchase of additional vehicles will be needed. A bus barn building expansion or a covered structure similar to an RV carport steel building is needed to protect the entire fleet from the elements and securely store the County's transit vehicles. An ongoing need is for vehicles with storage capacity for passengers' groceries and other purchases during the twice weekly shopping trips.

Transportation Needs for Seniors, Individuals with Disabilities and Low Income Individuals

The needs below were summarized from the stakeholder responses gathered.

- Sherman County Community Transit dial-a-ride operations provide basic transportation services for elderly individuals, those with disabilities and those with low income.
- Transportation to Portland for medical care continues to be a need.
- Regular and continuing outreach to the target population and to human service agency staff would help people appropriately utilize the transportation service.
- The shopping bus is vitally important to the target populations. That said, there is a need for adequate storage capability on the shopping buses. And because some riders purchase a lot of groceries or items on their shopping trip, the return home can become quite lengthy due to longer stops at residences in order to off-load all of the items purchased.
- More transportation services are desired:
 - additional day for shopping bus (3x/week)
 - occasional Portland shopping bus
 - increased transportation to social events and for outings
 - expanded weekend transportation options
 - more intra-county transportation services
 - transportation to Columbia Gorge Community College
 - increase regional travel options in the Mid-Columbia area
- Work-related transportation between Sherman County and Wasco County as well as Klickitat County is desired.

Strategies to Address Barriers and Gaps

Based upon information gathered from public meetings, surveys and stakeholder interviews, the following are strategies to address Sherman County's transportation needs, barriers and gaps. Strategies affecting seniors are marked by an S, those affecting individuals with disabilities are marked by a D, and those affecting low-income individuals are marked by an L. The Special Transportation Fund Committee was tasked with determining the priority rankings for each of the strategies corresponding to an identified transportation need, barrier or service gap. In the chart below, green denotes high priority; yellow denotes medium priority and grey denotes low priority. Please see Appendix G for the Criteria and Methodology used in determining strategic priorities and Appendix I for a List of the Prioritized Strategies.

Category: Sustain Existing Transportation Services

Identified Transportation Needs/Barriers and Service Gaps	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected (S/D/L)	Resource Capacity
Continue to provide the current dial-a-ride operations within the County through Sherman County Community Transit.	Maintain dial-a-ride operations.	High	S,D,L	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available through STF funding for operations
Continue to provide the current shopping transportation to The Dalles which is very popular and highly utilized.	Maintain shopping transportation service to The Dalles. Regularly review service schedule to ensure target populations needs are being met.	High	S,D,L	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available through STF funding for operations
Continue to meet demand for coordinated transportation services to meet Veterans' medical needs.	Continue partnership with Veteran's Administration to coordinate service for Veterans' travel to VA or VA-approved medical facilities.	High	S,D,L	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources available through the VA.

Category: Operations

Service Gaps/Barriers	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected (S/D/L)	Resource Capacity
Fleet Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for replacement of vehicles that have exceeded their useful life. • Provide funding for vehicle repair and preventative maintenance. • Seek funding for additional vehicles required for any service. 	High	S,D,L	Administration capacity exists. Financial resources likely available through STF, 531, capital equipment funds, other grants or resources.
Protection and safety of vehicle fleet.	Seek funding for expansion of bus barn or for covered structure similar to an RV carport steel building to protect the fleet from the elements and ensure the safety of the fleet.	High	S,D,L	Administrative capacity exists. Financial resources likely available through capital equipment funding.

Length of return shopping trip due to extra stop time to off-load purchases of riders.	Address the growing length of the return shopping trip with modifications to the service. For example: explore and identify ways to add a 3 rd day of shopping service.	High	S,D,L	May require significant Administrative capacity and additional resources to address. Mobility Manager could help with promotion and outreach of service change enhancement.
Donation-based fare for Sherman County Community Transit allows for operational funding and flexibility for low-income clients.	Maintain current fare system of suggested donation.	High	S, D, L	As demographic projection is for an increasingly aged and disabled senior population, continue to maximize federal and state grant funding to minimize the need for an increase in suggested fare donation.

Category: Service Expansion

Service Gaps/Barriers	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected (S/D/L)	Resource Capacity
As the need for transportation service to medical facilities in Portland, particularly OHSU, grows and exceeds capacity limitations, expand service.	Identify additional transportation services or options for those needing to travel to Portland for medical care. For example: utilize a ride-sharing service such as Drive Less Connect to match riders with drivers to Portland OHSU.	Low	S,D, L	Mobility Manager can help with Drive Less Connect promotion.
Need for transportation services for older adults in Sherman County for medical care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options to provide more transportation for medical care such as group trips; • Determine and pursue potential funding streams. 	High	S,D,L	Administrative capacity may be limited. Additional funding essential.
Provide additional transportation services to enhance quality of life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional Portland shopping trips • Social events and outings • Week-end transportation options • Intra-county transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit a Volunteer or Volunteers to coordinate special trips and outings. • Increase the number of group trips 	Medium	S,D, L	Requires initial additional admin capacity to recruit/train volunteers. May also require additional funding and/or resources to provide additional transportation services.

Need for regular transportation to work in both Wasco and Klickitat counties.	Further study demand for work-related transportation to locations outside Sherman County. Identify additional transportation services or options for those needing work transportation. For example: utilize a ride-sharing service such as Drive Less Connect to match riders with drivers to workplaces in Wasco and Klickitat counties or explore capacity for a vanpool to each county.	Low	D,L	Mobility Manager can help with Drive Less Connect promotion and also vanpool study. Work-related service expansion would require significant Administrative capacity and additional resources to address.
Transportation to Columbia Gorge Community College	Further explore the need for transportation to Columbia Gorge Community College. Consider promoting use of Drive Less Connect to help meet this need as well as emerging transportation network companies, e.g. Uber.	Low	D,L	Requires significant administrative capacity to study. Will require significant financial and human resources to provide this service. Mobility Manager can help with Drive Less Connect & other promotion.

Category: Outreach to Human Service Agency Staff

Service Gaps/Barriers	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected (S/D/L)	Resource Capacity
Human services staff is in need of information about Sherman County Community Transit and how it may help serve their clients' needs.	Conduct regular outreach to human services providers to educate on the transportation services available.	High	S,D,L	Mobility Manager can help with outreach to human services agency staff to share transit information and resources.

Category: Planning and Coordination

Service Gaps/Barriers	Strategies to Address	Priority	Population Affected (S/D/L)	Resource Capacity
Increase transportation options in the Mid-Columbia area	Continue participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance to network and collaborate with the Mid-Columbia transportation service providers. Gorge TransLink Alliance members continue to identify and bring to fruition funding opportunities to support regional transportation connections.	High	S,D,L	Administrative capacity is demonstrated.

Performance Measures

Identified high priority strategies are linked to performance measures in the coordinated transportation plan to help determine their efficacy in addressing service needs, gaps and barriers. The performance measures were developed in concert with the transportation provider to measure success of the high priority strategies. Performance measures were designed to capitalize on current tracking methods or otherwise be easy to track so they are not burdensome. The performance measures are listed below.

Transportation Need	Strategies	Performance Measure
Sustain Existing Transportation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain dial-a-ride operations • Maintain shopping transportation service to The Dalles • Continue partnership with Veterans' Administration to coordinate service for Veterans' travel to VA or VA-approved medical facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track ridership for disabled and non-disabled trips ○ Track ridership to The Dalles ○ Track ridership for VA medical trips
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for replacement of vehicles • Provide for regular preventative vehicle maintenance • Seek funding for expansion of bus barn or for a covered structure similar to an RV carport steel building to protect the fleet • Address the growing length of the return shopping trip with modifications to the service. • Maintain current fare system of a suggested donation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track vehicle mileage ○ Maintain maintenance schedule ○ Vehicles replaced as needed ○ Funding for vehicle repair & maintenance obtained ○ Obtain capital funding for expansion of bus barn or for covered structure similar to an RV carport steel building ○ Track fare donations ○ Track group trips
Service Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options to provide more transportation for older adults requiring medical care, such as group trips • Determine & pursue potential funding 	
Outreach to Human Service Agency Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize Mobility Manager to conduct outreach to human services agency staff to share transit information and resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobility Manager tracks outreach visits & shares with Sherman County Community Transit
Planning and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue participation in the Gorge TransLink Alliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sherman County Community Transit liaison attends at least 3 of the 6 bimonthly Gorge TransLink Alliance meetings annually (calendar year).

Plan Review and Adoption

2007-2010 Coordinated Transportation Plan Adoption

The new Transportation Coordinator, Marnene Benson-Wood, provided input for the finalization of this plan at a meeting on August 23, 2007. On August 28, 2007, the plan was presented to the STF Committee for their review. A workshop was held on September 6, 2007 at which time the Committee submitted recommendations for consideration which have been incorporated into the final plan. The 2007-2010 plan was adopted by the Sherman County Court on September 19, 2007.

2009-2011 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update

Under contract with Association of Oregon Counties, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District began updating the plan for 2009-2012. The draft was presented for comment to the Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee on January 20, 2009. The plan was posted on MCEDD's website (<http://www.mcedd.org>) for public review between February 2009 and March 2009. Notice of plan availability was noted in the Sherman County eNews and made available in hard copy or electronic (PDF) form. The final version was presented to the Sherman County Community Transit Coordinator, Sherman County Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee and to the Sherman County Court for adoption in April 2009.

2012 Coordinated Transportation Plan Addendum

The Gorge TransLink Mobility Manager met with Sherman County Community Transit in September 2012 to review the Coordinated Transportation Plan and prepare an addendum in advance of the full plan update anticipated for 2013. The plan addendum draft was presented for comment to the Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee on January 14, 2013. The final version was presented to the Sherman County Community Transit Coordinator, Sherman County Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee and to the Sherman County Court for approval in January 2013.

2016-2019 Coordinated Transportation Plan Update

Under an ODOT subcontract with the Hood River County Transportation District, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District began updating the plan for 2016-2019. A draft plan was presented to Sherman County's STF Committee on August 16 and DATE 2016. The draft plan was also posted on the MCEDD's website, the Sherman County website and Gorge TransLink Alliance website for public review between August and September 2016. Paper copies were available for review at the Wasco Pioneer Potlatch, the Sherman County Senior and Community Center and the Sherman County Public/School Library during the same time period. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide feedback. The final plan was approved by the Sherman County STF committee on September 27, 2016 and by the Sherman County Court on October 5, 2016.

Future Plan Reviews

This plan is designed to be reviewed and updated at least once every three years. A full plan review and update should take place in 2019/2020.

