Contents

INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.

EXISTING CONDITIONS ......................................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Area Profile ............................................................................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Population Centers ................................................................................................................. Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Socioeconomic Conditions .................................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.

EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES .......................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Local Public Transportation Service ....................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Regional Transportation Service ............................................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Client-Based Transportation Service ..................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Other Transportation Services ................................................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Coordination with Emergency Preparedness ........................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Observations ........................................................................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH ............................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Summary of Stakeholder Interviews ...................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Parties Interviewed ................................................................................................................. Error! Bookmark not defined.

NEEDS, STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES ........................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Previously Identified Needs and Priorities ............................................................................ Error! Bookmark not defined.
  Current Transportation Needs and Proposed Strategies and Priorities ................................. 3
Current Transportation Needs and Proposed Strategies and Priorities

Current public transportation needs in Coos County are identified below based on input from the County’s Special Transportation Advisory Committee, interviews with key stakeholders, survey results associated with other planning efforts, review of the needs identified above from the 2009 Coordinated Plan Update, and the Existing Conditions element of this Plan.

In many Coordinated Plans, a separate chapter on recommended improvements and priorities is prepared. There is often no direct linkage between these strategies and priorities and the unmet needs identified. To better assess that unmet needs are being addressed and to respond to current federal and state expectations for documentation, this Plan combines the identification of needs, strategies and priorities into a single chapter.

Available funding can change before and during funding cycles; therefore it is important to document greater needs than is typically available for funding. If more funding becomes available, the highest priority and achievable investments can be identified for which to apply available funds.

- **Strategy and potential action numbering is not intended to represent ranking of priorities or any sub-ranking within categories of priorities.**
- **Implementation of these strategies and potential actions may require additional and sustainable funding and fiscal partnerships with local jurisdictions and programs. Transportation system improvements will generally require assessment of realistic and sustainable funding options.**
- **Additional research and review may be required to determine the feasibility, timing, responsibilities and other factors associated with implementing strategies and potential actions.**

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**High Priorities**

(Strategy and potential action numbering is not intended to represent ranking of priorities or any sub-ranking within categories of priorities.)

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**Strategy #1:** Seek funding to preserve existing levels of public transit services within the County as the highest priority.
Need:
As in the 2009 Coordinated Plan Update, preserving existing services is a high priority in order to ensure that existing fixed-route, demand responsive, and inter-county services can continue to be provided and expanded to meet demand if and when additional funding is available. More funding for transit was a frequently mentioned need in stakeholder interviews.

Coos County has higher proportions of older adults, persons with disabilities, persons of low-income, and veterans than both the state and the nation and thus a proportionally higher demand for public transportation services.

Stakeholders cite CCAT as being very well run but at capacity, with its growth stymied by a lack of operating funds. Adequate, dedicated funding is needed for CCAT as the primary provider of public transportation in the County to enable it to improve existing transit services and respond to increased demand associated with demographic changes, significant projected growth in the older adult population and growing numbers of other special needs populations. Staff indicates that CCAT is currently about 30% short in meeting transportation needs.

It is critical that sufficient funding be obtained for replacement and maintenance of existing vehicles and acquisition of additional vehicles, as well as for capital improvements that ensure the safety, convenience and desirability of public transportation services. Funding for additional, accessible vehicles remains an ongoing need. To help maintain the safe and useful life of vehicles, an effective preventive maintenance program is very important. Funding for additional, accessible vehicles remains an ongoing need.

Interviewees also identified the need to ensure that various modes of public transportation are connected, including bicycles. Physical and safety barriers to accessing transportation services, e.g. lack of curb cuts and bus shelters, need to be assessed.

Private providers are critical in complementing the limited public transportation services in the County, especially early mornings, evenings, nights and in rural areas. In addition to filling gaps in the timing of available services, smaller vehicles such as taxis can provide service in areas physically inaccessible by CCAT vehicles.

Potential Actions:
1.1 Continue to strive to capture available Federal and State transit funding.
1.2 Explore alternative funding sources, including public-private partnerships such as financial contributions by health care providers toward the cost of demand response services.
1.3 Investigate dedicated funding sources for CCAT services, including contributions from cities in the County.
1.4 As the highest priority for County funding, continue to allocate STF and Section 5210 funds to programs and projects that currently receive such funds.
1.5 Continue to pursue funding for vehicle replacement and preventive maintenance, as well as funding for additional vehicles and other capital stock needed to accommodate expansion of fixed route and demand response services identified in this Plan.
Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan
Coos County

- Encourage maintenance managers to participate in opportunities, such as ODOT’s newly formed Transit Maintenance Council, to obtain information on best practices to improve reliability, efficiency and effectiveness of bus operations; reducing costs of maintenance facility operations; improving passenger comfort; and developing new and improved bus technologies.
- Work with ODOT to address challenges created by current standards for replacement vehicles.

1.6 Reduce the demand on costlier demand response services through promotion and public education of fixed route services, e.g. dispatchers counseling on accessibility/availability of fixed route services; incentives for fixed route use; screening of demand response rider eligibility; increased demand response service fares; appropriate policy changes; and other means.

1.7 Recognize the role of private providers, Yellow Cab, South Coast Taxi, Millennium Transportation, Bay Cities Ambulance, to assist in providing demand response services and to serve areas lacking public transportation services.

1.8 Seek funding to recruit, train and retain additional staff to assist in implementing Coordinated Plan strategies and priorities.

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**Strategy #2:**  
*As funding permits and as demand is demonstrated, expand access to and convenience of public transportation through expansion of and/or improvements to existing services.*

**Need:**

While stakeholders feel that, given available resources, current public transportation services are generally effective and responsive to needs within the more populated areas in the County. Rural areas -- Powers, Coquille, Myrtle Point, Bandon and the unincorporated area north of North Bend -- are not being well-served, however. This is of special concern due to the aging of rural area populations.

Neither fixed route nor demand response service is available before 7:00 am, evenings, and on weekends. Of note is that public transportation does not provide convenient access to employment for those working outside normal working hours. This especially impacts service sector employees, including those at the The-Mill-Casino-Hotel. The Coquille Tribe’s Coordinated Plan notes that the lack of child care and transportation are the primary reasons for employees missing work. Public transportation provided by CCAT does not meet the needs of shift workers. A priority need is transportation for entry-level casino employees.

Early/late service is identified by stakeholders as a higher priority than more frequent service. Providing more frequent service would require obtaining funding for additional buses. In addition to more frequent and expanded hours of service, needed service improvements include more bus stops and shelters. Geographic barriers, such as sidewalks without curb cuts, need to be inventoried and addressed.
Intercity service is available during the week but most services only provide two runs: one in the morning and one in the afternoon, limiting connections to other transit services. Connections to the north are also limited to Florence, with no coastal service between Yachats and Coos County communities.

While most of CCAT’s technology is up to date, e.g. security cameras were recently secured and the credit card purchase of bus passes have been instituted, improvements are needed to help plan and execute trips. Staff has identified the need for up-to-date technology to transmit bus arrival information.

Potential Actions:

2.1 As demand warrants and in coordination with local jurisdictions, expand fixed-route and demand response services.
   - As resources become available, expand fixed route operations to include early morning (before 7 am), evenings and weekend service, with expanded hours of weekday service a higher priority than weekend service.
   - Investigate opportunities to provide mid-day service to Southwestern Oregon Community College.
   - Consider an additional loop circulator service between Coos Bay and North Bend.
   - As demand justifies, expand fixed route services to the unincorporated area north of North Bend from 3 to 5-6 days per week.
   - Consider expansion of fixed route service to the Lakeside area.
   - Investigate feasibility of a Myrtle Point-Coquille-Coos Bay route.
   - Provide mid-day service from Coquille to Coos Bay to accommodate noon-time jail releases.
   - If demand justifies and with financial contribution by the City, provide fixed route service in Bandon on a trial basis, e.g. six months.
   - Seek grant funding from ODOT to reestablish South Coast Connector service connecting Bay Area with Coquille, Bandon and Myrtle Point.
   - Increase the frequency of Coastal Express service and expand service to 7 days/week.
   - Consider extending Coastal Express service to Reedsport and Florence.

2.2 Cooperate with the Coquille Tribe to conduct a pilot program to provide shuttle services for casino employees to key destinations near concentrations of employee housing, e.g. Walmart and Fred Meyer.

2.3 Coordinate services between Coastal Express and “Loop Bus” so that it becomes easier for passengers to access various destinations in the Bay Area.

2.4 Investigate opportunities to improve out-of-county connections, both to adjacent counties and to distant medical destinations.

2.5 Provide facilities needed to address physical barriers to access and to ensure convenient and safe access to transit, including curb cuts, bus stops/shelters, and more and better signage. Increase ADA accessibility and safety at bus stops.
Address safety and convenience in siting transit stop locations.

Identify and, as funding allows, address physical barriers, such as sidewalks without curb cuts and bus stops without shelters (e.g., North Bend Medical Center).

2.6 Investigate complementary use of bus tickets/passes among the various public transportation services.

2.7 Seek funding for technologies (e.g., coordinated trip planning, mobile tools) and data management programs that facilitate the most efficient and cost-effective provision of services.

2.8 Continue to pursue opportunities to improve pedestrian/bicycle connections to transit.

**Strategy #3: Improve freedom of movement and quality of life for transit dependent populations and assure transportation access to jobs, health care, education and other basic services.**

**Need:**

As is typical in most areas of the state, the growth in special needs populations and associated need for human and health services is creating increased demand for public transportation services. The projected growth in the older adult population over the next several decades to at least one-third of the total County population will make it particularly challenging to meet the need for demand responses services. Ride delays and ride denials may become commonplace due to a lack of available vehicles.

Although demand response service is available within most incorporated areas, it typically operates only within city limits, restricting intercity access. Rural areas are not served.

To help accommodate the growth in the older adult population, the senior care industry -- retirement centers, assisted living centers, foster homes, etc. -- has also been growing. While some of these facilities provide their own transportation, there is no coordination among them or with public transportation providers to try to maximize utilization of vehicles. Overall, the growth in senior care facilities, which are spread throughout the County, impacts demand for demand response services at a time when such service is essentially at capacity.

The number of persons with disabilities is also increasing as a percentage of the county’s population, creating a need for more wheelchair accessible vehicles. Expanded travel training is needed for older adults and people with disabilities to help them understand what transportation services exist and how to use them. There is also the need to work with senior centers and nursing homes to prepare clients for rides and to explain the different types of services, for example non-emergent medical transportation (NEMT) versus non-ADA demand response service provided by CCAT.

The State’s phasing out of sheltered workshops is disrupting the transportation of persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities, as they are now distributed to a larger number of employment settings and, in turn, placing greater demands on demand response services. In
addition, there is the challenge of finding employment; unless staff can find day jobs (8-5) for these clients, they are challenged to obtain jobs because they have limited to no transportation at other hours. The State is not reimbursing local providers for their additional transportation costs associated with this program change.

There are concentrations of persons with low income in Coos Bay, North Bend, Coquille and Myrtle Point. In Coos Bay, Powers and Myrtle Point, the number of persons with low income exceeds 35% of the population. As noted under Strategy #2, public transportation is limited for those working outside normal working hours, including many lower income persons with service sector positions.

The special transportation needs of veterans to access medical care and the younger population to participate in sports and after school programs are not currently being met. The Disabled American Veterans program is designed to provide transportation to medical and other services for disabled veterans, but it struggles to find and retain volunteer drivers and wheelchair accessible vehicles. The Veterans Choice program enables veterans to access local medical and mental health services. Access to specialized services in Medford, Roseburg, Eugene, Portland and Redding remains a challenge.

School district policies restrict their ability to transport youth to after school programs, e.g. Boys and Girls Clubs. Transportation for homeless youth to schools of origin is another challenge. In an effort to facilitate access to higher education facilities, CCAT is introducing a free-ride pass for Southwestern Oregon Community College students.

**Potential Actions:**

3.1 Preserve the existing demand response services and, as resources permit, expand these services, including to rural areas, to accommodate both current and projected demand.

- Seek funding for smaller wheelchair accessible vehicles capable of accessing difficult to reach locations and for vehicles targeted to transporting intellectually/developmentally disabled persons, especially those in rural areas, to vocational and residential programs.
- To help manage the increasing demand for demand response services, provide travel training and work with human service agencies and senior facilities to provide escorted services on fixed route services.
- As funding permits, expand service to assisted living and retirement centers in rural portions of the County.

3.2 Explore opportunities to coordinate demand response trips with TransLink’s non-emergency medical trips (NEMT) trips to outside the County.

3.3 Investigate opportunities to improve transportation access to employment sites for low-income workers, including service to casino resorts and other hospitality industry sites. Assess options such as vanpools, shuttles or other flexible transportation services.

- Ensure services are available and convenient for accessing employment training.
- Investigate the feasibility of a ridesharing and carpooling clearinghouse for people commuting to jobs and employment training programs.
3.4 Increase outreach and marketing of services to low-income residents and offer discounted fares or other strategies to address the cost of public transportation for low income riders.

3.5 Work with veteran service agencies and organizations to improve and expand transportation assistance for veterans, including coordinating trips to VA medical facilities with the regional brokerage and existing providers.

3.6 Investigate opportunities to facilitate student use of public transportation to access education facilities.
   - Negotiate service agreements with Southwest Oregon Community College for enhanced student transportation services.
   - Coordinate with school districts and after school programs on scheduling, policy and financing issues affecting the ability to provide after school transportation.

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**Strategy #4:** Develop a volunteer driver program to address the increase in demand for services.

**Need:**
CCAT does not currently use volunteer drivers and there is no Countywide volunteer clearing house. Staff indicates that there are often three 12-passenger vehicles idle each day that could be available to volunteer drivers. Major constraints to the use of volunteers include liability insurance costs, standards for volunteer drivers, and health and age issues. While these factors make it difficult to find, train and retain them, volunteer drivers would help meet the demand for drivers.

**Potential Actions:**
4.1 Expand efforts to recruit and train volunteer drivers.
4.2 Develop and maintain a volunteer driver training and recruitment program.
4.3 Seek legislative action to address increasing insurance costs associated with use of volunteer drivers.

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**Strategy #5:** Continually strive to coordinate the planning for and provision of public transportation services with the provision of human and health services.

**Need:**
The lack of consultation with CCAT, ODOT and other entities involved in planning for and providing public transportation for the planned move of DHS facilities to the North Bend Airport argues for better coordination between human service and public transportation providers. The DHS move is expected to complicate access to human services and is necessitating relocation of several bus stops and route changes by CCAT.

As noted under Strategy #3, one of the effects on the Governor’s Employment First Initiative has been to shift the cost of transporting developmentally/mentally disabled persons to places
of employment from the Department of Human Services to local public transportation providers. Additional and longer trips are now having to be provided by CCAT, consuming a larger portion of available STF funds.

Potential Actions:
5.1 Encourage DHS and other human/health service providers to assess and communicate the transportation needs of their clients for access to transportation to CCAT and other transportation providers in the County.
5.2 Seek funding from DHS to augment that provided by the STF-funded Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program for transportation to residential and vocational programs serving people with intellectual/developmental disabilities.
5.3 To achieve efficiencies and reduce costs, investigate opportunities for coordination of services with private health care providers, e.g. CCO and Star of Hope.
   - Coordinate with medical centers and clinics on scheduling of medical visits.
   - Investigate opportunities for more convenient and less expensive service to dialysis and methadone clinics.
   - Coordinate with TransLink and senior centers, assisted living centers, and retirement centers both on the use of public transportation by their clients and on opportunities for these facilities to provide or increase their own transportation services.
   - Where feasible, locate bus stops at senior centers and retirement facilities.
   - Develop partnerships with health care providers to assure that non-Medicaid patients can get to services and treatment and have transportation home when discharged.
   - Coordinate with medical facilities on opportunities to provide transportation for their employees.
5.4 Regularly convene meetings with human and health service providers to identify mutual transportation needs and opportunities to coordinate services.
5.5 Encourage appointment to the County’s STF Advisory Committee of eligible representatives with human and health service experience, including the local CCO. Explore opportunities to expand the breadth of interests and experience through ex-officio positions or other means.
5.6 Continue to participate on countywide and regional human and health services advisory committees that link public transportation to human and health services.
5.7 Ensure that public transportation providers are regularly trained in emergency preparedness and have up-to-date plans to assist as needed in emergency management.
Medium Priorities
(Strategy and potential action numbering is not intended to represent ranking of priorities or any
sub-ranking within categories of priorities.)

Strategy #6: Expand efforts to inform the public of available public transportation services,
including low-income and non-English speaking populations.

Need:
While staff and most stakeholders report that awareness of public transportation services in
Coos County is generally good, there is an ongoing need to communicate broadly about
available services and to outreach to those populations without convenient access to public
transportation, that are hesitant to use public transportation, or that are unaware of available
services. While public transportation users may be aware of the specific services that they
utilize, unless they are taking advantage of such, they have little to no knowledge of connecting
services or of transportation opportunities within the region.

CCAT is planning a Transit Day with free transit rides and ride ambassadors. Similar promotions,
rider training and continuing distribution of information about available services are needed in
order to increase ridership, especially among seniors and low income persons.

Input from stakeholder interviews suggests that the business community/Chambers of
Commerce sometimes convey a bad impression of transit to County visitors and generally do
not promote transit use.

Although constituting a small proportion of the County’s population, Latinos a dispersed
population that is difficult to serve and that especially needs access to public transportation due
to lack of vehicles and/or driving licenses, cultural attitudes towards women driving, and other
factors.

Potential Actions:

6.1 Investigate the feasibility of a central information clearinghouse (e.g., telephone hotline,
website, etc.) covering all transportation services in the county.

6.2 Continuously engage in public education and outreach efforts to inform County residents
and visitors of available public transportation services and how to access them.

- Develop improved branding of CCAT vehicles, employees and services through logos,
paint styles, bus wraps, name tags, etc.

- Improve website information and sharing of information among providers about the
various services available within the County and region.

- Periodically offer free transit days as a public education tool.
Address business community concerns regarding bus stops, transit inefficiencies and other issues through continuing outreach and education efforts. Encourage the business community to promote transit use for their employees.

6.3 Help improve knowledge of and comfort in use of public transportation services by non-English speaking populations by providing translated information that explains how to use public transportation services. Disseminate information via Latino community radio stations and at human and health services offices, churches and key community gathering places, including Latino food stores.

6.4 Periodically participate in cultural awareness training programs.

Strategy #7: Continue to pursue opportunities for regional collaboration and expansion of the regional transportation system.

Need:
As part of planning process for the 2009 Coordinated Plan updates for Coos and Curry counties and the Coquille Tribe and CTCLUSI, STF staff participated in a regional coordination summit to identify shared needs and opportunities for coordination. Common needs included:
- Expanded capacity to be able to respond to increasing demand for services
- Rural areas not well served
- Challenges accessing medical services, especially out-of-area services
- Employment transportation challenges
- Limited inter-city connections
- Lack of resources, including training, to serve populations requiring higher levels of service
- Lack of knowledge about available services
- Funding to recruit, train and retain staff

Strategies identified by the group are included are included in the Actions below.

Potential Actions:

7.1 Participate in programs of regular communication and coordination among regional STF Coordinators and Committees, including regional coordination meetings, quarterly teleconferences or email communications, and rotating presentations on lessons learned and on challenges in service delivery.
- STF staff periodically attend Curry County STF Advisory Committee meetings and contribute information to Coquille Tribe and CTCLUSI staff for transmittal to their STF Advisory Committees.
- Contribute to quarterly communications organized by ODOT’s Regional Transit Coordinator with information on STF Committee meetings, trainings, grant opportunities, other items of mutual interest.
- Based on input from Curry County, investigate opportunities to use transit vehicles for the delivery of goods.

7.2 Pursue opportunities with regional partners for coordination and/or cooperative training on topics of mutual interest, including PASS training for
drivers, data management needs and approaches, interaction with CCOs on
grouping medical trips and other issues, travel training and other tools to
increase comfort with use of transit, and social media use and management.

7.3 Continue to coordinate with Coastal Express, Greyhound, Pacific Crest Bus Lines and other
intercity and regional providers to promote access to regional destinations.

7.4 Assist ODOT or other appropriate parties to biennially update the database of
transportation providers/resources in the region.

Low Priorities
(Strategy and potential action numbering is not intended to represent ranking of priorities or any
sub-ranking within categories of priorities.)

Strategy #8: Improve public transportation services service to rural portions of the County.

Need:
Rural portions of the County are poorly served by public transportation, in large part due to low
population densities and associated excessive costs of service. Fixed-route service outside of
incorporated communities would be cost prohibitive. Demand response services are currently
oversubscribed and are provided to only five of the seven incorporated communities in the
County (no service to Lakeside or Powers). Expansion of demand response service to rural areas
would further dilute the capacity to provide this service. Alternative services are needed to be
able to provide any level of public transportation services to rural areas in the County.

Potential Actions:
8.1 Explore the feasibility of providing public transportation services to rural areas, and to the
communities of Lakeside and Powers, through deviated or flexible bus routes, feeder
services, volunteer-based shopping or medical shuttles, and private providers, such as taxi
companies.
8.2 Investigate ride-sharing as an option to transit service to rural areas.

Strategy 9: Establish mechanisms for routinely monitoring Plan implementation.

Need:
The 2009 Plan Update pointed out that no one in the County has the responsibility for following
up on identified transportation needs and establishing coordination partnerships within the
County. While the STF Advisory Committee is charged with overseeing Plan implementation,
the Committee meets on an “as needed” rather than regular basis and has a number of vacant
positions. The health services community is not represented.
Potential Actions:

9.1 Designate a County “public transportation czar” to be responsible for coordinating the various modes of transportation -- public transportation, air, freight, active transportation, etc. -- and establishing coordination partnerships within the County.

9.2 Regularly assess customer and driver needs through surveys and other mechanisms.

9.3 Request County and city planning and community development departments to notify public transportation providers of land use proposals that potentially effect the demand for and provision of public transportation services.

9.4 Actively engage the STF Advisory Committee in annually monitoring implementation of the Coordinated Plan.