

Appendix A References

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Appendix B Stakeholder Focus Group Notes

INTRODUCTION

The project team conducted eight focus group meetings on Dec. 8 and Dec. 9, 2015 with key stakeholders interested in the Columbia River Gorge and the potential for a new transit service in the area. The goal of the meetings was to collect information and develop a better understanding of the region's perspective on the following topics:

- Current transportation challenges and opportunities
- Effectiveness of current transit services
- Potential markets for transit to, from and within the region
- Components of a successful transit service

A total of 40 stakeholders were able to participate in the focus group meetings. Meeting participants were identified by Oregon Department of Transportation staff or referred by other participants during the invitation process. Not all stakeholders who were invited were able to participate. Participants with similar backgrounds were grouped into the same meeting to collect specific input from various expertise.

The input documented from these discussions will be used to inform the technical studies and draft strategies. The meetings also provided an opportunity to address any questions and concerns participants had about the project and inform them about ways to remain involved with the planning process.

Key Findings are summarized in Chapter 4. Individual summaries from each meeting begin are arranged chronologically in the following order.

Group Number	Group Name
Focus Group 1	Public Transit Providers
Focus Group 2	Recreation / Tourism
Focus Group 3	Local Government / Elected Officials
Focus Group 4	Regional Planning
Focus Group 5	Tourism
Focus Group 6	Local Government / Elected Officials
Focus Group 7	Private Transit Providers
Focus Group 8	East Gorge Congestion

FOCUS GROUP 1 – PUBLIC TRANSIT PROVIDERS

Dec. 8, 2015 | 8:30 a.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	Dan Marchand	TriMet
	Teresa Christopherson	Clackamas County Mt. Hood Express
	Leslie Garth	Ride Connection, Inc
	Deanna Bisbee	Hood River County Trans District dba Columbia Area Transit
	Arlene Johnson	Skamania County Public Trans
	Ron Nails	Hood River County Trans District dba Columbia Area Transit
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Kristen Stallman	Oregon Department of Transportation
	Karyn Criswell	Oregon Department of Transportation
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	EnviroIssues

Problems identified

- The Columbia River Gorge is an increasingly popular destination with growing traffic congestion
- The busy season used to be limited to the summer months, but the season has recently expanded to February – October, due in part to unusually warm weather in 2015
- Parking facilities in popular areas are over capacity and people are parking illegally along the Historic Columbia River Highway and State Route 14, which exacerbates congestion
- People parking along the highways create a safety hazard, as there is no pedestrian space along the highways; there were recent pedestrian fatalities on SR 14
- Transit services get requests to cross the Hood River Bridge because there is no pedestrian traffic allowed on the bridge

State of existing transportation services

Skamania County Public Transportation

- Service Monday – Friday
- Route between Stevenson and Carson
- Route between Stevenson and Vancouver with connection to C-Tran
- Service to senior citizens and people with disabilities
- Dial-a-ride service for medical and social service appointments
- West End Transit (WET) Bus pilot shuttle to Dog Mountain trailhead funded by Western Federal Lands grant through Federal Lands Access Program
- Over half of WET Bus riders are from outside of Stevenson
- WET Bus partnership with community, including marketing support from Friends of the Columbia River Gorge
- WET Bus couples transit with trail concierge service – “Hike by bus”

- WET Bus uses park and ride lot on Skamania County land with variable message sign to tell people when parking at trailhead is full
- WET Bus adapted schedule to better accommodate the amount of time hikers spend at destination, so they do not have to wait too long for the next shuttle
- Forest Service has been a good partner with Skamania County Public Transportation

Ride Connection

- Based in Gresham, currently has no service in the Gorge but serves some people in Corbett
- Primarily serves senior citizens and people with disabilities – most rides travel west within the Portland metropolitan region for medical purposes
- Primarily works with volunteer schedules
- East county service area has 10 vehicles equipped with wheelchair accessibility; largest vehicles seat 14 passengers
- Currently very little service on the weekends – vehicles could be available for another use

Columbia Area Transit (CAT)

- Approximately 70% of rides are for medical purposes
- Fleet of 10 vehicles; nine are wheelchair accessible
- Service to Portland on Tuesday and Thursday with stops at Portland Art Museum, Oregon Health and Sciences University and Clackamas Town Center; connection to MAX light rail
- Runs to The Dalles and Cascade Locks on Monday – Friday
- Experiencing growth in ridership connected with increase in marketing efforts
- Increasing requests for shuttle to Portland International Airport; few requests to reach Union Station
- Starting new master plan process to expand service

Mt. Hood Express

- Service between Sandy and Timberline every day with 6-7 runs per day
- 70% of riders are commuting to work; 30% of riders are recreationists
- Seeking ongoing funding to continue service
- Potentially expanding service to Hood River and Warm Springs;
- Hood River service would be Saturday and Sunday; there is no identified need for Hood River Service Monday – Friday

TriMet

- Service area does not reach into the Gorge, but lines 80 and 81 reach Glen Otto Park in Troutdale
- TriMet is willing to be a good partner in the planning process

- TriMet receives requests to access FedEx in Troutdale Reynolds Industrial Park; it is possible they could expand service in Troutdale to reach these employment areas
- TriMet is always looking for potential park and ride locations
- TriMet is willing to accommodate other transit providers at Gateway Transit Center

Transit challenges

- Cost per rider is high in rural areas due to lower population density and higher number of miles driven
- It is difficult to increase ridership if people do not have to pay for parking at their destination
- Bus schedule needs to work with the amount of time people typically spend at a destination
- Need to identify potential park and ride locations for riders from Portland metro area and inter-city stops in the Gorge
- People in rural areas do not want to transfer service lines to reach their destinations
- Gorge residents are not aware of existing transit services or think the services are only for medical purposes
- Some funding is restrictive – e.g. veteran funding can only be used for specific purposes
- Columbia River bridge crossings are challenging for transit providers due to cost of tolls and narrowness
- Few Gorge residents are trying to get to Multnomah Falls

Opportunities

- People want transit service between Hood River and Mt. Hood
- There is seasonal employment on Mt. Hood in the winter – Mt. Hood Meadows operates a shuttle from Hood River for employees
- People want transit service to the Pacific Crest Trail in Cascade Locks
- Some recreationists like kite boarders and cyclists might use transit if it could accommodate their gear – CAT can carry bicycles
- People want better connection throughout the Gorge on both sides of the Columbia River
- Vince Hill is a popular cycling location
- CAT is developing a new master plan and is interested in expanding service
- The parking garage at Gresham Transit Center is underused
- CAT is being asked to expand service in Hood River to help relieve limited parking
- Potential starting points / park and ride locations:
 - Troutdale Airport
 - Gateway Transit Center
- Potential rider markets
 - Senior citizens
 - People with disabilities

Follow-up items

- Dan Marchand will find out if TriMet receives requests for access to the Gorge
- Leslie Garth will investigate Ride Connection's ability to extend service into the Gorge on weekends
- Map correction: There is no transfer between Columbia Area Transit and Greyhound

FOCUS GROUP 2 – RECREATION/TOURISM

Dec. 8, 2015 | 10:30 a.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	Holly Howell	Port of Cascade Locks
	Tamara Kennedy-Hill	Travel Portland
	Tom Kloster	Trail Keepers of Oregon
	Stan Hinatsu	U.S. Forest Service
	Billie Moser	Travel Portland
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Kristen Stallman	Oregon Department of Transportation
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	EnviroIssues

Problems identified

- The busy season used to be limited to the summer months, but the season has recently expanded to February – October, due in part to unusually warm weather in 2015
- Recreation facilities are over capacity for visitors, which is threatening to damage the facilities and natural resources
- Capacity at recreation facilities has historically been controlled by limiting parking spaces; if transit increases the number of people visiting a site, the resource could be damaged further; other capacity controls may need to be implemented
- It is difficult to manage parking in the Gorge because parking rules are different depending on which agency manages the land; people will avoid parking in areas where there is a parking fee
- People who park for a multi-day hike will take parking spots others could use
- People try to plan impromptu trips and end up stopping at the first waterfall or trailhead they find, which contributes to congestion
- Forest Service has put boulders on roadside of Historic Columbia River Highway to prevent people from parking illegally and blocking the road
- Congestion can prevent emergency vehicles from reaching their destination

State of existing transportation services

- 20% of visitors travel 500 miles or more to visit the Gorge; 50% of visitors travel less than 50 miles
- Tourists purchase package tours on motor coaches
- Recent growth in private tour operations have produced 20,000 annual motor coach trips in Portland – packages that include the Gorge are most sold tours
- Travel programs encourage tourists to purchase a tour package to avoid congestion and have a better experience
- Trail Keepers of Oregon has a messaging platform people use to arrange carpools to recreation sites

- People wait at Gateway Transit Center and Troutdale Outlet Mall for informal carpool, known as “slugging” – used by Portland Meetup
- Millennials will use car sharing services like Zipcar, but it is too expensive for them to reach the Gorge
- The Bend Breeze and Mt. Hood Express provide service on U.S. 26

Transit challenges

- Transit schedules need to be appropriate for the destination – people do not want to feel stuck
- Transit needs to be convenient – people have to make two transfers to reach Mt. Hood Express from Portland
- Availability of funding
- Availability of park and ride locations
- Providing enough frequency for transit service to be useful
- Ability to carry recreation gear like bicycles
- There are many trailheads in the Gorge that people want to reach – transit has a “last mile” challenge
- Stops need to be accommodating to people without cars who are waiting for a bus – restrooms, lights, shelters, benches
- Transit service needs to be available all days during the peak season at a minimum
- Dedicated hikers start earlier and finish later than casual hikers

Opportunities

- Individual travelers do not want to drive if they can avoid it
- Travel companies are trying to promote Oregon as a four-season travel destination to spread out the busy season
- People want to get from Portland International Airport to the Gorge without a car
- People want to get dropped off at trailheads, do a multi-day hike through the Gorge, and get a ride back
- People want to cycle through the Gorge and take a one-way transit trip back
- Investigate timed parking at Multnomah Falls
- Positive messaging can be used to provide travel information when people are planning their trips while simultaneously reminding people to be a good steward when they recreate
- There is an overlap in values between hikers and people who want to limit their environmental impact by not driving
- Park and rides could also have a “Trail Concierge” to help guide people to less busy areas of the Gorge
- There is an information kiosk at Bridal Veil Falls with resources about other Gorge destinations
- Gateway Transit Center is attractive due to light rail connection with Portland International Airport

- Potential starting points / park and ride locations
 - Rooster Rock State Park has a large underused parking lot – currently need to pay to park
 - Troutdale Outlet Malls
 - Gresham Transit Center
 - Gateway Transit Center – MAX connection to airport
- Potential destinations
 - Portland Women’s Forum
 - Vista House
 - Multnomah Falls – Tourists expect it and it cannot be skipped
 - Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery
 - Cascade Locks – Pacific Crest Trail connection
 - Hood River
 - The Dalles
- Potential rider markets
 - Millennials who do not want to use cars
 - Hikers trying to reach trailheads
 - Tourists who do not want to drive
 - Busy period in waterfall corridor is 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; families tend to arrive around noon

Follow-up items

- Map edit: Add Wahkeena Falls trailhead

FOCUS GROUP 3 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT / ELECTED OFFICIALS

Dec. 8, 2015 | 1:30 p.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	Doug Daoust	Mayor of Troutdale
	Craig Ward	City Manager of Troutdale
	Gordon Zimmerman	City of Cascade Locks
	Kate Sinner	Regional Solutions, Governor's Office
	Paul Blackburn	Mayor of Hood River
	Stephen Lawrence	Mayor of The Dalles
	Scott McGuire	Senator Merkley's Office
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Kristen Stallman	Oregon Department of Transportation
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	EnviroIssues

Problems identified

- People cannot walk or cycle across the Hood River Bridge
- There are problems getting veterans programs to work with existing transit service, or it is not convenient
- Veterans can get their mileage reimbursed for trips to a Veterans Affairs Hospital, but a van service cannot get reimbursed by VA for transporting Veterans to a VA Hospital
- Parking is limited at Mt. Hood Meadows
- Parking is limited at popular tourist sites
- Cars are broken into in parking lots
- Congestion on Historic Columbia River Highway is a problem
- I-84 does not have a high-occupancy vehicle lane

State of existing transportation services

- Mt. Adams Transportation (operated by Klickitat County) provides rides across Hood River Bridge, but it is not frequent enough for most people to use
- The Dalles has a \$5 taxi service
- There are seasonal private shuttles that serve Hood River for Mt. Hood Meadows employees and Polar Express riders
- Vanpools are used by employers like the U.S. Forest Service
- ODOT's variable message sign at Troutdale notifies people when Multnomah Falls parking lot is full

Transit challenges

- Most transit services in the Gorge like Columbia Area Transit and Mt. Adams Transportation are demand-actuated, which is less convenient because you have to plan and call ahead of time

- Services that depend on cellular data like Uber do not function well in the Gorge due to lack of data coverage
- Greyhound serves Hood River and The Dalles but they are cutting back on amenities and require ticket purchases to happen online, which is a challenge for people without reliable internet access
- People with disabilities have trouble planning trips with transit – they need to know every barrier they may face from starting point to destination
- Lack of parking and congestion in downtown Hood River
- Ability to carry recreation gear like bicycles
- People do not know what transit services are available
- TriMet does a good job of transporting people to central Portland, but it is difficult to get to places between cities in east Multnomah County
- Parking structures for park and rides are expensive
- Commuters have different destination preferences than recreationist/tourist markets – commuters do not want to spend time stopping at recreation locations
- Large buses cannot access some tourist sites like Vista House or would add to congestion on Historic Columbia River Highway
- Busy season in the Dalles starts earlier than other Gorge locations to the west due to dryer climate
- People do not have a compelling reason to give up individual flexibility that comes with driving their own car
- Availability of funding
- People do not want to transfer to reach their destination
- People do not want to walk more than a block from their transportation to their destination

Opportunities

- The Dalles is updating its Transportation System Plan and would like to work with any plans for transit in the Gorge
- The Dalles is planning a transit center west of its downtown area and will include connection to Greyhound
- The cities in east Multnomah County that border I-84 are collaborating on the Halsey-Weidler Corridor Plan, which has included discussions to improve transit between east Multnomah County and the waterfall corridor in the Gorge; Halsey Corridor Plan applies to I-84 exits 14, 16 and 17 and could include temporary parking or parking structures to help connection to the Gorge
- Gorge transit needs to connect with transit on Washington side – 1/3 of Gorge residents live in Washington
- People want to cycle through the Gorge and take a one-way transit trip back
- Employees want connections to job centers like Troutdale Reynolds Industrial Park
- Gray Line of Portland is looking into starting a service from Troutdale to the Gorge, potentially starting at McMenamins Edgefield

- South Metro Area Regional Transit (SMART) in Wilsonville may be a model for Gorge transit
- People commute between cities in the Gorge for work
 - Hood River is an out-commuting community
 - 70% of people who work for Google in The Dalles live in the Gorge, and half of those people live in The Dalles
- Place park and ride / parking structures near businesses to compound service
- People will stop driving to a destination if they have to pay for parking
- Increase mobility and access of low income populations
- Potential starting points / park and ride locations
 - Halsey-Weidler Corridor locations
 - McMenamins Edgefield
 - Troutdale Outlet Malls
 - Gorge urban centers
- Potential destinations
 - Mt. Hood Meadows
 - State parks
 - Museums
 - Mosier is a cyclist destination
 - Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery
 - Beacon Rock (Washington side)
 - All waterfalls
 - Gorge urban centers
 - Line between Hood River – The Dalles would be useful
- Potential rider markets
 - Senior citizens
 - People with disabilities
 - Tourists
 - Recreationists
 - Commuters – traveling to urban centers primarily using I-84

Follow-up items

- Collect information on transportation plans in progress within project area
 - The Dalles Transportation System Plan
 - Halsey-Weidler Corridor Plan

FOCUS GROUP 4 – REGIONAL PLANNING

10/08/2015, 3:30 p.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	Amanda Hooley	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
	Michele Spatz	Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
	Susan Law	FHWA, Western Federal Lands Division
	Robin Shoal	USFS, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	Envirolssues

Problems identified

- Recreation facilities are over capacity for visitors, which is threatening to damage the facilities and natural resources
- Capacity at recreation facilities has historically been controlled by limiting parking spaces; if transit increases the number of people visiting a site, the resource could be damaged further; other capacity controls may need to be implemented
- It is difficult to manage parking in the Gorge because parking rules are different depending on which agency manages the land; people will avoid parking in areas where there is a parking fee
- It is difficult to manage access to the Gorge because important transportation corridors run through it – access cannot be managed like popular national parks

State of existing transportation services

- Skamania County Transit route between Stevenson and Carson
- Skamania County Transit route between Stevenson and Vancouver with connection to C-Tran
- Service to senior citizens and people with disabilities
- Dial-a-ride service for medical and social service appointments
- West End Transit (WET) Bus pilot shuttle to Dog Mountain trailhead funded by Western Federal Lands grant through Federal Lands Access Program
- WET Bus partnership with community, including marketing support from Friends of the Columbia River Gorge
- WET Bus couples transit with trail concierge service – “Hike by bus”
- WET Bus uses park and ride lot on Skamania County land with variable message sign to tell people when parking at trailhead is full
- WET Bus adapted schedule to better accommodate the amount of time hikers spend at destination, so they do not have to wait too long for the next shuttle
- Mt. Adams Transportation provides service across the Hood River Bridge and connects White Salmon, Hood River, Bingen and has bicycle racks
- Larger employers provide vanpools

Transit challenges

- Commuters have different destination preferences than recreationist/tourist markets – commuters do not want to spend time stopping at recreation locations
- Gorge residents would prefer to have service all week to their destinations even if that resulted in less frequent service each day
- Pilot programs that fail are difficult to start up again – it is important to start small and focused
- Cost per rider is high in rural areas due to lower population density and higher number of miles driven
- Transit schedules need to be appropriate for the destination – people do not want to feel stuck
- Resources need to be put into marketing transit service so people know how to use it
- People want a regional transit system that connects existing smaller systems
- Existing transit service in the Gorge is thought to only be used by people with disabilities or senior citizens for medical trips
- Ability to carry recreation gear like bicycles
- Ability to bring dogs on buses
- Availability of funding
- People do not have a compelling reason to give up individual flexibility that comes with driving their own car
- Jurisdictional boundaries of transit systems
- Large buses cannot access some tourist sites like Vista House or would add to congestion on Historic Columbia River Highway
- People want service to be frequent enough so they do not need to remember a schedule
- Any construction within National Scenic Area needs to follow guidelines – variable message signs would not be allowed

Opportunities

- Leverage community partners to market transit service in materials and online
- Give people better access to the Washington side of the Gorge to spread out heavy use on Oregon side
- The Gorge should be marketed as a single region – do not divide it into two states
- Gorge transit service should coordinate and market itself with the Mt. Hood Express
- Pacific Crest Trail hikers use Skamania County Transit to access Vancouver and resupply
- Mt. Hood Express found unexpected market in Mountain Bikers who take the shuttle up the mountain and ride back down multiple times per day
- Funding for transit projects is available through Federal Lands Access Program, which funded Mt. Hood Express and WET Bus
- Gorge TransLink compiles information on transit service in the Gorge and could be a venue for future Gorge transit information

- Positive messaging can be used to provide travel information when people are planning their trips while simultaneously reminding people to be a good steward when they recreate
- Park and ride locations should also have good access to other transit so people do not have to drive
- People want express routes from The Dalles to Portland
- There is demand for early morning access to recreation sites
- Partner with car sharing programs in Portland
- Find a venue for real-time information that will tell people which parking areas are full, which areas are busy, and recommend where they should go and how they should get there
- Potential starting points / park and ride locations
 - Gresham Transit Center
 - Gateway Transit Center
 - Rooster Rock State Park
- Potential destinations
 - Multnomah Falls
 - Exit 28: Bridal Veil Falls
 - Exit 40: Eagle Creek
 - Exit 41: Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery
 - Klickitat Rail Trail
 - Gorge urban centers
 - Line between Hood River – The Dalles would be useful
- Potential rider markets
 - Commuters – traveling to urban centers primarily using I-84
 - Recreationists, including Pacific Crest Trail connection in Cascade Locks

Follow-up items

- Map edit: Differentiate land managers within green areas – there are many different land managers within the National Scenic Area
- Map edit: WET Bus goes to Dog Mountain trailhead
- Survey question: What new one-way hiking or cycling opportunities would be available if people could take transit back to their starting point instead of looping back?
- Find out if user statistics are available for how often trails are used

FOCUS GROUP 5 – TOURISM

Dec. 9, 2015 | 8:30 a.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	Claude Cruz	West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce
	Greg Webb	USACE, Bonneville Dam
	Jeannette Kloos	Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway
	Rick Buck	Multnomah Falls Lodge
	Dorothy Brown-Kwaiser	Oregon State Parks
	Dave Lear	Mid-Columbia Bus Company
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Kristen Stallman	Oregon Department of Transportation
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	Envirolssues

Problems identified

- Multnomah Falls I-84 parking lot causes a backup on the freeway when the lot is full
- Large motor coaches are contributing to congestion on Historic Columbia River Highway
- When ODOT’s variable message sign at Troutdale says the Multnomah Falls I-84 parking lot is full, drivers take the Historic Columbia River Highway either because they know they can access Multnomah Falls that way or to stop at another park in the waterfall corridor to ask staff for help – further contributing to congestion
- There is not enough enforcement of parking and traffic violations on the Historic Columbia River Highway
- People from out of town do not know where to park or what transportation options exist
- Viaducts are choke points on Historic Columbia River Highway
- Large numbers of people are stressing facilities at Multnomah Falls such as restrooms and wastewater treatment
- Capacity at recreation facilities has historically been controlled by limiting parking spaces; if transit increases the number of people visiting a site, the resource could be damaged further; other capacity controls may need to be implemented

State of existing transportation services

- Multnomah Falls Lodge has an employee shuttle that originates at Rooster Rock State Park
- Mid-Columbia Bus Company has a fleet of natural gas buses that are available for use in the summer – currently serves students during school year

Transit challenges

- Multnomah Falls I-84 exit does not have a full interchange to facilitate bus turnaround

- Multnomah Falls I-84 parking lot has a gate installed by ODOT to close when the lot is full; the gate cannot currently be opened remotely to allow select vehicles through such as buses
- Bonneville Dam area may be a challenging place to find a bus stop and turnaround point
- Bonneville Dam area has pedestrian access issues if people need to walk from a transit stop
- Transit schedules need to be appropriate for the destination – people do not want to feel stuck

Opportunities

- People want transit service to the Pacific Crest Trail in Cascade Locks
- Troutdale is at the hub of several trail systems between the Portland metro region and the Gorge
- West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce has a visitor center in Troutdale and can help spread information and direct people to the options we want them to use
- Tour buses give their Vista House schedule to State Parks so they know when to expect tour groups
- Find a venue for real-time information that will help people plan their trips – tell people which parking areas are full, which areas are busy, and recommend where they should go and how they should get there
- The region could be served by an express transit service that travels along I-84 and stops at hub points where smaller shuttles with more frequency could deliver people to sites along Historic Columbia River Highway; hubs could be designed as a place where people can wait comfortably for less frequent service
- There may be transportation grants available for a pilot project through U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or U.S. Forest Service
- Multnomah Falls Lodge may be interested in helping fund a solution to congestion and parking problems
- Potential starting points / park and ride locations
 - Troutdale Rail Depot Museum is a hub for cyclists
 - Troutdale Airport
 - Rooster Rock State Park
- Potential destinations
 - Vista House
 - Latourell Falls
 - Bridal Veil Falls
 - Angel’s Rest
 - Columbia River Highway State Trail trailhead
 - Cascade Locks
 - Ainsworth State Park
 - John Yeon Trailhead
 - Rowena Crest Trailhead

- Multnomah Falls
- Larch Mountain
- Beacon Rock (Washington side)
- Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery
- Hood River
- One-way trips: John Yeon to Cascade Locks, Starvation Creek to Viento State Park, Hood River to Mosier
- Connection to Fruit Loop
- Potential rider markets
 - Tourists
 - Recreationists
 - Families

Follow-up items

- Dorothy Brown-Kwaiser will send Vista House bus schedule to Nelson\Nygaard
- Find data on average duration of time spent at each site

FOCUS GROUP 6 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT / ELECTED OFFICIALS

Dec. 9, 2015 | 10:30 a.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	David Meriwether	Hood River County
	Kathy Fitzpatrick	City Manager of Mosier
	Steve Wheeler	City of Hood River
	Jacob Egler	Senator Wyden's Office
	Rian Windsheimer	Oregon Department of Transportation
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Kristen Stallman	Oregon Department of Transportation
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	Envirolssues

Problems identified

- Hood River's new waterfront park is becoming more congested
- Lack of parking and congestion in downtown Hood River
- Multnomah Falls gets most attention and advertising in the Gorge, which contributes to congestion
- Congestion in the waterfall corridor does not benefit economy of Gorge communities
- People do not know about other recreation opportunities besides the popular destinations

State of existing transportation services

- Columbia Area Transit
- Mt. Hood Meadows Employee Shuttle
- Employee van shares

Transit challenges

- The Gorge has small roads, steep hills and sometimes icy conditions
- Ability to carry recreation gear like bicycles
- It is difficult to increase ridership if people do not have to pay for parking at their destination
- People in rural areas have a car-dependent mentality

Opportunities

- Encourage people staying at hotels in the Gorge or Troutdale to leave their cars and use transit
- There is seasonal employment on Mt. Hood in the winter – Mt. Hood Meadows operates a shuttle from Hood River for employees; people in Hood River want a shuttle to Mt. Hood Meadows for recreation

- Housing prices are increasing in Hood River, causing people to move away and commute in
- Hood River Valley and Mosier Valley have seasonal population growth of immigrant workers who do not always have cars
- There is a park and ride used in Mosier
- People in the Portland metro area want to access the Gorge without a car
- People want better access to transportation information
- Transit passes should be compatible with other transit providers
- Increase mobility and access of low income populations
- People want to cycle through the Gorge and take a one-way transit trip back
- People do not like driving in the Gorge when the weather is bad – people may choose transit in these conditions
- Place park and ride / parking structures near businesses to compound service
- There may be an opportunity for the private sector to fill the transit gap on the Historic Columbia River Highway that could connect to Gorge transit on I-84
- People want better connection throughout the Gorge on both sides of the Columbia River
- Gorge transit needs to connect with transit on Washington side
- Potential starting points / park and ride locations
 - The Dalles
 - Mosier
 - Hood River near China Gorge and CAT offices
 - Mosier near I-84
 - Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery
 - Cascade Locks
 - Troutdale Airport
 - McMenamins Edgefield
 - Gateway Transit Center
- Potential destinations
 - Multnomah Falls
 - Gorge urban centers
 - Line between Hood River – The Dalles would be useful
 - Portland
- Potential rider markets
 - People who do not own cars
 - Low income populations
 - Commuters

FOCUS GROUP 7 – PRIVATE TRANSIT PROVIDERS

Dec. 9, 2015 | 1:30 p.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	David Duncan	Gray Line Tours
	Stephen Abernathy	Greyhound
	Martin Hecht	Martin's Gorge Tours
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	Envirolssues

Problems identified

- Waterfall corridor is heavily congested
- Traffic is worse eastbound than westbound – people tend to use the Historic Columbia River Highway to reach the waterfalls then take I-84 back to Portland
- Driving can be dangerous in the Gorge during the winter

State of existing transportation services

- Martin's Gorge Tours
 - Helps people reach their destinations once they are in the Gorge
 - Provides guided tours and hikes
 - Operates 8-passenger van and 20-passenger coach
 - Partners with lodges and river cruises to take guests on tours
 - Markets services through website, word of mouth, chambers of commerce and referrals; moving away from printed materials
- Gray Line Tours
 - Provides daily tours from Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland to the Gorge
 - Operate from April – November
 - Motor coaches seat 47 passengers
 - Stops at Vista House, Latourell Falls, Multnomah Falls, and Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery
 - Partners with local hotels, Amtrak Vacation and travel organizations
 - Market tours through online travel agencies, Travel Oregon and Travel Portland
 - Proposing a new line starting at McMenamins Edgefield using vintage style buses to tour people down Historic Columbia River Highway; Thursday – Sunday
 - Partners with Mt. Hood Railroad to shuttle people for Polar Express out of Hood River
- Greyhound
 - Operates six daily schedules through the Gorge
 - There is a small stop in Hood River and the Dalles; most people are traveling through to farther destinations

- Has national marketing campaigns and partnership with Amtrak and National Bus Traffic Association
- Tries to connect stops with local transit centers
- The Yakama Nation and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have shuttles that operate in the Gorge

Transit challenges

- Congestion in the waterfall corridor makes it difficult to keep tours on schedule
- Bridge closures are difficult for tours
- Gray Line has adjusted tour schedule to be earlier in the day to avoid congestion
- Large coaches can fit on Historic Columbia River Highway viaducts, but non-professional drivers in other vehicles get nervous and take up too much space, causing congestion
- Bonneville Dam area may be a challenging place to find a bus stop and turnaround point
- Columbia Area Transit does not use the same location used by Greyhound and Gray Line Tours in Hood River

Opportunities

- Potential starting points / park and ride locations
 - Gateway Transit Center
 - Troutdale Outlet Mall
 - McMenamins Edgefield
 - Rooster Rock
- Potential destinations
 - Multnomah Falls
 - Cascade Locks
 - Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery
 - Eagle Creek
 - Hood River
 - The Dalles
 - Starvation Creek
- Potential rider markets
 - Tourists

FOCUS GROUP 8 – EAST GORGE CONGESTION

Dec. 9, 2015 | 3:30 p.m.

Participants	Name	Organization
	David Mysinger	Northeast Multnomah County Community Association
	Ernie Drapela	Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee
	Kevin Gorman	Friends of the Gorge / Towns to Trails
	Wayne Stewart	Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee
	Brent Laizure	Multnomah County Sheriff
Project staff	Name	Organization
	Steve Crosley	Nelson\Nygaard
	Brie Becker	Nelson\Nygaard
	Seth Baker	EnviroIssues

Problems identified

- The Columbia River Gorge is an increasingly popular destination with growing traffic congestion
- Parking facilities in Multnomah Falls and other areas along the waterfall corridor are over capacity and people are parking illegally along the Historic Columbia River Highway
- Forest Service has put boulders on roadside of Historic Columbia River Highway to prevent people from parking illegally and blocking the road
- Marketing campaigns by travel organizations have increased traffic in the Gorge significantly
- People do not have to pay for parking in places that are over capacity
- The sheriff used to tow illegally parked vehicles, but that caused more problems as people were stranded in the Gorge
- Citing parking tickets does not seem to discourage illegal parking
- Cyclists increase congestion on Historic Columbia River Highway because there are no shoulders
- It is difficult to manage parking in the Gorge because parking rules are different depending on which agency manages the land; people will avoid parking in areas where there is a parking fee
- If people have to pay to park, they will continue to do what they do now – park illegally
- There is no gate on the east entrance to the Multnomah Falls I-84 parking lot – people heading east can turn around and enter that way

State of existing transportation services

- WET Bus adapted schedule to better accommodate the amount of time hikers spend at destination, so they do not have to wait too long for the next shuttle
- WET Bus couples transit with trail concierge service – “Hike by bus”

Transit challenges

- Capacity at recreation facilities has historically been controlled by limiting parking spaces; if transit increases the number of people visiting a site, the resource could be damaged further; other capacity controls may need to be implemented
- Large buses cannot access some tourist sites like Vista House or would add to congestion on Historic Columbia River Highway
- Commuters have different destination preferences than recreationist/tourist markets – commuters do not want to spend time stopping at recreation locations

Opportunities

- Gorge communities have benefited economically from increase in Gorge traffic, and they want to continue moving people through waterfall corridor and into commercial areas
- Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee is trying to get people to start their Gorge trips from urban centers through Gorge Hubs program, primarily serving cyclists; proposed hubs: The Dalles, Mosier, Hood River, Cascade Locks, Troutdale, Wood Village
- ODOT previously identified a park and ride location in Dodson to serve Multnomah Falls
- Benson State Recreation Area could be used as a park and ride to serve Multnomah Falls
- Towns to Trails is developing a network of European style trails connecting urban areas in the Gorge; waterfalls are already connected, working on connections between Washougal – Stevenson and Hood River – The Dalles
- The two viaducts on the Historic Columbia River Highway will be reconstructed in 2017 and 2018 – transit will need to help mitigate road closures
- The region could be served by an express transit service that travels along I-84 and stops at hub points where smaller shuttles with more frequency could deliver people to sites along Historic Columbia River Highway; hubs could be designed as a place where people can wait comfortably for less frequent service
- Potential starting points / park and ride locations
 - Multnomah Falls could be a transit hub
 - Benson State Recreation Area
 - Dodson
 - Rooster Rock State Park
- Potential destinations
 - Multnomah Falls / waterfall corridor
 - Cape Horn (Washington side)
- Potential rider markets
 - Tourists
 - Recreationists
 - Commuters – traveling to urban centers primarily using I-84

Appendix C Public Survey

The following presents the survey text that was used to develop the online survey distributed to the public.

COVER PAGE

Improving public transit in the Columbia River Gorge (along the I-84 Corridor) is among several solutions to congestion, safety, and access being studied by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) in 2016.

We are asking all interested Gorge residents and visitors to complete an online survey by January 31 as part of the *Columbia River Gorge Transit Study*. Your responses will play a major role in helping us craft attractive and useful transit options in the Gorge for residents and visitors alike.

This survey should take between 5 and 10 minutes to complete. We thank you in advance for your valuable input.

INTRODUCTION (ALL RESPONDENTS)

- Where do you currently live?
 - ZIP Code [Numeric field]
- What is your primary connection/purpose for travel within the Columbia River Gorge?
 - Visitor in the Columbia River Gorge <**Direct to visitors question set**>
 - Resident of a community within the Columbia River Gorge <**Direct to residents question set**>

VISITORS

- Which destinations do you visit in the Columbia River Gorge area and approximately how long do you stay? Leave blank if you do not visit the destination. (Note options below are ordered west to east) [Table of drop down menus]

Columbia River Gorge Transit Study | Existing Conditions and Market Analysis Report
Oregon Department of Transportation, Region 1



- Destinations
 - o Portland Metro Area
 - o Corbett
 - o Vista House
 - o Rooster Rock
 - o Multnomah Falls
 - o Historic Columbia River Highway Waterfalls (other than Multnomah Falls)
 - o Historic Columbia River Highway Trailheads
 - o Bonneville Dam and Hatchery
 - o Cascade Locks
 - o Hood River
 - o Mosier
 - o Rowena Crest/Tom McCall Preserve
 - o The Dalles
 - o Other (specify) [Text field]
- Duration of stay
 - o 0-2 hours
 - o 2-4 hours
 - o 4-6 hours
 - o 6 or more hours

Trip Preferences

- When you travel to one or more of the Gorge area destinations, what is your primary mode of transportation?: [Multiple choice, select one]

- Drive/ride in a rental vehicle
- Drive/ride in a personal vehicle
- Ride a bicycle
- Use a private tour/shuttle service (specify which) [Text field]
- Other (specify which) [Text field]
- When driving or riding in a vehicle (personal or rental) for travel to one or more of the Gorge area destinations, how many people are typically in the vehicle? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - 1 (just you)
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 or more
- How far in advance do you typically plan your trip to Gorge area destinations? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - Day of
 - 1-2 days prior
 - 3-7 days prior
 - 2-4 weeks prior
 - More than 1 month prior
- How often, annually, do you visit Gorge area destinations? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - Once per year or less
 - 2-5 visits per year
 - 6-10 visits per year
 - 11-19 visits per year
 - 20 or more visits per year
- How long is your typical visit to Gorge area destinations? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - Short trip (1-3 hours)
 - Half a day (4-6 hours)
 - Whole day (7+ hours)
 - Overnight
 - Multiple nights
- How many different destinations do you typically visit on a single trip to the Gorge area? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - 1
 - 2-3
 - 3-5
 - 5 or more

Traffic Congestion Issues

- Do you experience traffic congestion related issues in the Gorge? (e.g., low parking availability, stuck in traffic) Where and when do these issues occur?: [Text field]
- *[Please answer this question if you have visited, or plan to visit, Multnomah Falls; otherwise skip]*

Parking at Multnomah Falls is increasingly difficult, particularly during the peak visitation times of the year where congestion leads to back-up on the Historic Highway, illegal shoulder parking, and closure of the Multnomah Falls parking area on I-84.

ODOT is looking at options to address these congestion-related issues. One solution being considered is convenient off-site parking at a nearby location coupled with a free, frequent all-day shuttle (i.e. every 15 minutes) to Multnomah Falls.

Thinking about your last visit or next visit to Multnomah Falls, would you consider an off-site parking/shuttle option? [Multiple choice, select one]

- Yes
- No
- Why or why not (comment) [text field]

Transit Service

- Thinking about your next trip to the Gorge area, how likely would you be to choose public transit instead of driving if you could access the service from the Portland Metro Area and it served the key recreational destinations and towns in the Gorge (such as Multnomah Falls, Cascade Locks, and Hood River)
 - Very likely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Not likely
 - I would not choose public transit over my current travel mode
 - Why or why not (comment) [text field]
- Where would be the most convenient place to connect to Gorge transit service in Multnomah County (via TriMet or a park and ride)? [Rank choices]
 - Downtown Portland
 - Gateway/NE 99th Ave TriMet MAX Station
 - Gresham City Hall TriMet MAX Station
 - Downtown Troutdale/Outlet Mall
 - Other [write in]
- If you were planning transit service in the Gorge, which are the recreational/tourist destinations that should be served? [Rank choices]
 - Vista House
 - Rooster Rock
 - Multnomah Falls
 - Historic Columbia River Highway Waterfalls (other than Multnomah Falls)
 - Historic Columbia River Highway Trailheads

- Bonneville Dam and Hatchery
- Rowena Crest/Tom McCall Preserve
- Corbett
- Cascade Locks
- Hood River
- Mosier
- The Dalles
- Other (specify) [Text field]

<Direct respondents to demographics questions>

LOCAL RESIDENTS

- Which destinations do you visit in the Columbia River Gorge area, what is the primary purpose of your visit, and approximately how long do you stay? Leave blank if you do not visit the destination. (Note options below are ordered west to east) [Table of drop down menus]



- Destinations
 - Portland Metro Area
 - Corbett
 - Vista House
 - Rooster Rock
 - Multnomah Falls
 - Historic Columbia River Highway Waterfalls (other than Multnomah Falls)
 - Historic Columbia River Highway Trailheads

- Bonneville Dam and Hatchery
- Cascade Locks
- Hood River
- Mosier
- Rowena Crest/Tom McCall Preserve
- The Dalles
- Other (specify) [Text field]
- Purpose
 - General visitation/sightseeing
 - Outdoor recreation (e.g. hiking)
 - Commute
 - Medical appointments
 - Shopping/errands
 - Social
- Frequency of visits
 - Daily
 - A few times per week
 - A few times per month
 - Once per month or a few times per year
 - Once per year or less
- How do you typically get around in the Gorge? [Multiple choice, select one or more]
 - Drive alone
 - Carpool/Get dropped off
 - Human services transportation (Medicaid, volunteers, DHS, Veteran's Van)
 - Columbia Area Transit
 - Skamania County Transit
 - Mt. Adams Transportation
 - Walk
 - Bike
 - Private taxi
 - Other (specify) [Text field]
- How available is a car to you for trip making?
 - I have my own car
 - I share a car with someone else
 - I do not own a car but have access to one when I need it
 - I do not own a car and sometimes have access to one
 - I do not own a car and do not have access to one.
 - I am unable to drive

- Are there trips that you would like to make but don't make due to limited car availability? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - No
 - Yes (describe) [Text field]
- Are you aware that Columbia Area Transit provides limited fixed route transit service between Hood River and The Dalles Monday through Friday, as well as one trip every Tuesday and Thursday between Hood River and the Portland Metro Area? If yes, how often do you use it? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - I am not aware of public transit in the Gorge
 - Yes, I am aware of it, but I do not use public transit in the Gorge
 - I use public transit in the Gorge occasionally [text field for routes]
 - I use public transit in the Gorge frequently [text field for routes]
- If a regular fixed route transit service (i.e. Monday-Friday or 7 days a week with service in the morning, midday and evening) were available in Gorge area, which types of trips would you use it for? [Multiple choice, select one or more]
 - Work
 - Recreation/tourism
 - Shopping/errands
 - Medical appointments
 - Regional trips
 - Getting around locally
 - Other
 - I would not use transit
- If a regular fixed route transit service (i.e. Monday-Friday or 7 days a week with service in the morning, midday and evening) were available in Gorge area, where would you take it? [Rank choices]
 - Portland Metro Area (likely requiring a connection to TriMet bus or MAX light rail to complete the trip)
 - Corbett
 - Dodson
 - Cascade Locks
 - Hood River
 - Mosier
 - The Dalles
 - Troutdale
 - Bonneville
 - Other [write in]

<Direct respondents to demographics questions>

DEMOGRAPHICS (ALL RESPONDENTS)

- What is your race/ethnicity? [Multiple choice, select one]

- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Hispanic/Latino
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- African/African American
- Other
- Prefer not to answer
- What is your age group? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - <=18
 - 19-29
 - 30-45
 - 45-65
 - >=65
 - Prefer not to answer
- What is your household income? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - \$19,999 or less
 - \$20,000-\$39,999
 - \$40,000-\$59,999
 - \$60,000-\$74,999
 - \$75,000-\$99,999
 - \$100,000+
 - Prefer not to answer
- Do you consider yourself to be a person with a disability? [Multiple choice, select one]
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to answer
- Is there anything else you'd like to share? [Text Field]

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey. To sign up for updates on the process, visit www.GorgeTransitStudy.org, or contact Kristen Stallman, Project Manager, by email at Kristen.Stallman@odot.state.or.us or by phone at (503) 731-4957.