



Existing Conditions Report

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Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Existing Conditions Report

This report provides an overview of the public transportation system in Oregon. It is an introduction to the subject matter and a reference document to help inform the conversation around public transportation in the development of the Oregon Public Transportation Plan. The wide array of existing public transportation services and providers (both public and private sector) in Oregon reflects the variety and uniqueness of communities across the state. From large urban providers to small county and rural community providers, and from demand-response door-to-door service to airport shuttles, taxis, and commuter rail, the spectrum of services provided by many public transportation providers in all 36 counties work to serve the diverse communities of Oregon.

The Oregon Public Transportation Plan (OPTP) will include policies and strategies that influence the work of the state and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), frame and impact the development of local plans, and influence the decisions of transit agencies, other state agencies, and regional and local governments. This review of the current state of public transportation in Oregon provides high level details related to public transportation services, providers and users of public transportation, and how public transportation is implemented today. This information helps illustrate the trends, opportunities, and challenges affecting public transportation across the state. It is also foundational to the development of new policies and strategies supporting public transportation in Oregon.

This Existing Conditions Report is organized into the following sections:

- **Section 1, Introduction:** describes the purpose of this report and key findings.
- **Section 2, Public Transportation in Oregon:** describes the public transportation services offered in the state, existing riders of public transportation, and demographic trends affecting public transportation service and ridership in the state.
- **Section 3, Public Transportation Providers and Ridership:** provides information about the variety of public transportation providers in the state, including general characteristics of providers and descriptions of issues and challenges.

Public transportation providers in Oregon are a diverse group:

- Mass Transit Districts
- Transportation/Transit Districts
- Counties
- Cities
- Tribes
- Councils of Government
- Non-profits
- Private firms (for example, Greyhound)



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- **Section 4, Delivering Public Transportation Service:** reviews the roles of government and providers in delivering service, describes the different ways in which providers are organized, and examines public transportation funding and challenges.

1.2 What is public transportation?

Public transportation, in the broadest sense, can include many forms of transportation—from traditional buses, taxis, carpooling, and university shuttles, to passenger rail, demand-response van service, and aerial trams. To focus the scope of the OPTP and the policies and strategies it will contain, this report primarily covers a network of services provided by public agencies, such as cities, counties, mass transit districts [Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon, (TriMet), and Lane Transit District (LTD)], for example, and others and private sector entities such as intercity transport contractors. This report discusses public transportation modes, including light rail, passenger rail, street car, bus rapid transit (BRT), conventional fixed-route, and demand-response service. The report addresses other services, like taxis, transportation network companies (such as Uber or Lyft), car-sharing, carpooling, vanpooling, and others as they relate to public services, but they are not a focus of this report.

Public transportation in urban and rural areas in Oregon takes many forms, including:

- Fixed route bus services
- Bus rapid transit
- Light rail
- Streetcar
- Demand-response services
- Intercity rail and bus

1.3 Key Findings

This report and its appendices cover a wide variety of topics. The information is useful to help understand and focus on opportunities or challenges that can be converted to potential actions. Key findings related to public transportation in the state include:

- **Oregon’s population is growing rapidly.** Oregon’s population has increased by about 1 million residents since the last OPTP was adopted in 1997. Population growth is increasing travel needs across all modes of transportation. Demographic changes are likely to affect public transportation in the future, with the baby boomer population aging and millennials now reaching adulthood; travel preferences and needs are likely to change as a result.
- **The Willamette Valley, Rogue Valley, Bend area and Columbia, Umatilla and Morrow Counties are growing most rapidly.** Other areas of the state are mixed, with some counties growing and others, mostly in Eastern Oregon, showing little population change. Increased urbanization in the rapidly growing areas is likely to create greater need for public transportation, while meeting rural transportation needs will continue to be a challenge, especially in sparsely populated areas.

- **More people are traveling via public transportation.** Public transportation trips in Oregon increased by over 90 percent since 1990. As a result, more Oregonians are using public transportation to meet a greater share of their travel needs.
- **Public transportation service, on average, has become more efficient.** Since 1990, total trips on public transportation have increased by about 90 percent, but the amount of service provided has increased by only about half. Public transportation is now moving a greater number of people at a lower cost per passenger as a result.
- **Many households use public transportation.** Statewide survey data¹ reveal that 20 percent of Oregon households have individuals who use public transportation at least once per week. People who are older, students, youth, economically disadvantaged, minority, or living in urban areas are more likely to use transit than the general population. These ridership factors have implications for maintaining and improving service in all areas of Oregon.
- **Oregonians support public transportation.** Statewide survey data² reveal that Oregonians strongly support having public transportation services within and between Oregon's communities. This support has positive implications for providers and local governments seeking to maintain existing service or expand service.
- **The types of public transportation services vary widely across the state.** The Portland metropolitan region has the highest concentration of public transportation, with relatively frequent levels of service and multiple modes available to a large portion of the community. Areas such as Eugene/Springfield or Salem also have relatively high concentrations of public transportation available for certain areas. Rural areas in the state, where population is more dispersed and longer trips required, typically have the fewest public transportation options and less frequent service.
- **Public transportation funding is not always predictable.** Local providers vary widely in their organizational structure and rely on different funding sources to meet their operational and capital needs; operational funds are more limited than capital funding although the availability of funding overall is a concern. Some providers can generate their own tax revenue, while others are almost completely dependent on state and federal funds. Agencies that lack taxing authority or other secure local funding often find it difficult to plan for larger projects and increase operations, and may find it difficult to even find sufficient local funding match. This variation in funding leads to an uncertain future for funds available and requires staff time to develop grant applications for discretionary grants and efforts to raise local taxes or implement new ones.

¹ The Transportation Needs and Issues Survey is conducted approximately every 2 years to assess Oregonians' perceptions of the transportation system, understand how the systems is used, and to identify transportation-related concerns. The most recent surveys have been conducted via web and mail survey modes to over 5,000 households.

² Ibid.



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- **Of Oregon’s approximately 2,000 transit vehicles, more than half will need replacement to bring the fleet to a “state of good repair”³ by 2020.** Aging vehicles cost more to maintain and may affect service reliability and comfort. However, funds to replace vehicles may not be available when needed.
 - **Roadway congestion is an operational concern for urban public transportation providers.** Most transit vehicles operate in mixed traffic with cars and trucks, making them subject to delay and reliability problems due to urban congestion. This delay is costly, both in time and money, for providers, customers, and other roadway users.
 - **Providers are challenged to provide service in less densely populated areas with longer distances between origins and destinations.** Land use patterns, even in the largest cities, result in suburbs and outlying areas that are difficult to serve. In rural areas, this issue is compounded by constrained funding for public transportation, limiting the reach and quantity of service available.
 - **Rising housing prices in some areas are causing people to move to find affordable housing, frequently to suburban or rural areas.** It is frequently more difficult to provide adequate services to suburban areas as the land use patterns are more disparate. In rural areas, dispersed housing in lower cost communities increases the challenge to provide daily commute trips.
 - **The capacity of agencies to plan for the future and respond to changing public transportation needs is compromised by the need to manage the multiple demands and daily needs of providing service.** This affects many aspects of public transportation service provision including administration, planning for future services, and training. Smaller providers cited the ability to retain trained staff and access training for new staff as a significant concern.
 - **Technology is changing how people travel and how public transportation operates.** Developing transit technologies, like “efare,” smart phone applications, traveler information, and operations improvements such as transit signal priority, represent major opportunities to improve the rider experience and improve services across the state.
 - **There is increasing interest in developing and enhancing connections between public transportation options and services.** Intercity transportation connections are available via intercity bus and passenger rail for some areas of the state. These services can be improved through increased service coordination among intercity and local providers, and by improved coordination between local public transit services to improve connections within and between cities.

³ FTA is proposing to define state of good repair as “the condition in which an asset is able to operate at a full level of performance.” Source: FTA <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/news/federal-transit-administration-issues-proposed-rule-transit-agencies-achieve-state-good>.

SECTION 2

Public Transportation in Oregon

Public transportation is an essential component of Oregon’s overall transportation system. It provides mobility and accessibility for urban and rural residents and connectivity among places and people. In Oregon, public transportation meets the daily travel needs of thousands of residents. People in Oregon use public transportation to get to work, play, school, medical services, worship, shopping, and other places. Over 80 agencies receive grants from ODOT to serve communities in every county in the state. Different public transportation modes function better in different circumstances, and thus a wide variety of vehicles and service types are offered throughout Oregon. Nineteen transit agencies provide fixed- route services; the remainder operates demand- response and commuter bus services. In addition to the grant-funded agencies, there are numerous private and non-profit entities that provide transportation services to the public such as airport shuttles and taxis and non-profit agencies like senior centers, churches, and social service agencies. This section describes types of public transportation services offered in the state, as well as ridership and demographic trends affecting public transportation service and ridership. Understanding the wide variety of public transportation services, ridership characteristics, and key demographic trends helps identify opportunities or challenges that can be addressed through the OPTP. While the section includes examples, it does not provide a comprehensive review of every service in the state.

*Public transportation provides **mobility, accessibility, and connectivity** for Oregon’s communities. These related terms are important to understanding the purpose of public transportation.*

***Mobility**—ability to travel between destinations*

***Accessibility**—ability to reach a wide variety of destinations*

***Connectivity**—presence of useful, integrated transportation links that allow people to move between destinations*

Note: There are many tools that will allow one to explore public transportation services and routes in the state. Map applications such as those from Google and Apple show many transit routes; ODOT’s Tripcheck⁴ also has some transit information. ODOT hosts an online map application that allows for exploration of transit routes and stops with other transportation information, called TransGIS⁵. (At the site, select Public Transit layers on the left and zoom in to see stops and routes from many Oregon providers.) A related tool is being developed by ODOT and Oregon State

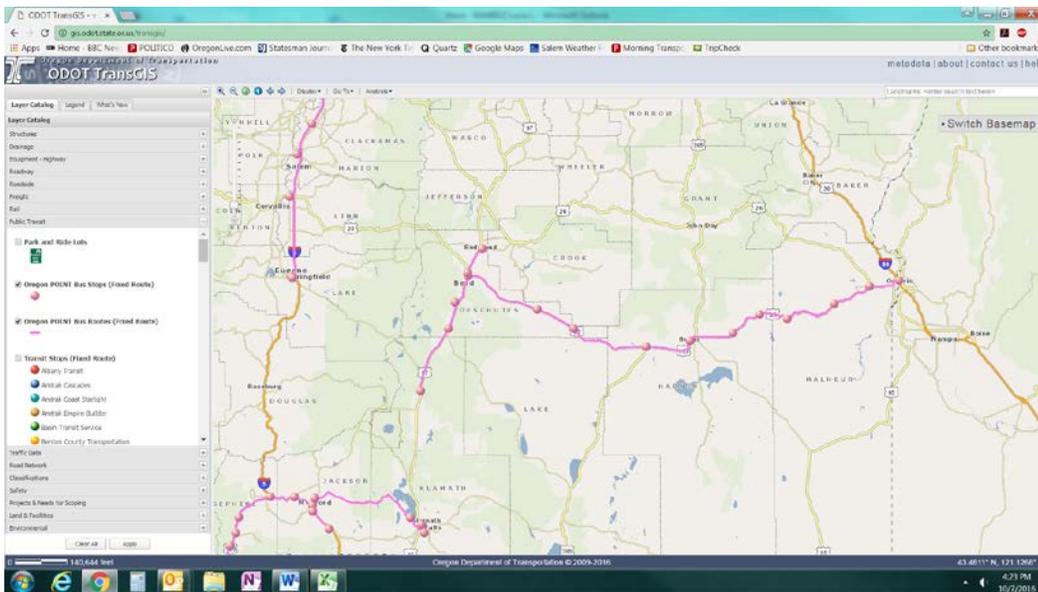
⁴ ODOT’s Tripcheck tool is at <http://www.tripcheck.com/>

⁵ ODOT’s TransGIS tool is available at <http://gis.odot.state.or.us/transgis/>



University, called the Transit Network Analysis tool⁶. The TNA tool combines transit information with census data to help consider impacts of service.

Most information for all these applications comes from GTFS (general transit feed specification) data. GTFS is a national data standard that Oregon’s Tri-Met and others helped develop; it includes route, schedule, and stop information for fixed route transit providers. This enables public agencies and private companies to share this basic data and enable access to developers of map applications. In the illustration below, TransGIS shows stops and routes for Eastern Oregon POINT services, with parts of the Cascades and Southwest routes also shown.



2.1 Public Transportation Services

For the context of a statewide plan, it is important to understand the breadth of public transportation services available to Oregon’s communities to ensure that future policy decisions represent the spectrum of modes and users. Oregon has fourteen public transportation districts in addition to city, county, nonprofit, and tribal public transportation service providers. The Department of Transportation does not directly provide public transportation services; however, it contracts to provide services like Public Oregon Intercity Transit (POINT) bus service and Amtrak Cascades. The state also funds pupil transportation and transportation services provided to eligible individuals including non-emergency medical transportation; these are not the subject of this work.

The range and types of services offered statewide vary widely based on the needs of communities and constraints, such as community population, development patterns and funding. The Portland metro region has the greatest variety of services, while rural areas, (such as Gilliam County) tend to have shared ride, door-to-door, demand-response service.

⁶ The TNA tool is available at <https://tnasoftwaretool.engr.oregonstate.edu/TNAtoolAPI-Webapp/wiki/#!index.md>

The following describes the major types of services offered in the state, identifies where and why they are offered, and reviews their major functions.



MAX light rail transit in Portland

2.1.1 Light Rail Transit

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) defines light rail as an “electric railway with a light-volume traffic capacity as compared to heavy rail.”⁷ Light rail moves large numbers of people, often on exclusive guideways, allowing trains to have high-frequency service and avoid road congestion in highly urbanized areas. It is considered “high capacity transit” (HCT). Light rail operating costs are typically lower per passenger due to high numbers of riders and lower costs to operate vehicles. Because of the high capital costs associated with constructing light rail, it is typically only developed where there are large numbers of potential riders.

In Oregon, light rail is limited to the Portland metro region. The region’s first 15-mile light rail corridor—the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) Blue Line—became operational in 1986. TriMet has since developed light rail throughout the region and is currently operating nearly 60 miles of light rail on five lines. Rail based transit services, because of their permanence and high service frequencies, are most suitable for high density, compact development and are strongly associated with “transit-oriented development” (TOD), or mixed residential and commercial developments built adjacent to or near transit stations.

2.1.2 Commuter Rail

Commuter rail, which generally has higher per vehicle passenger capacity than light rail, is limited in Oregon to the Westside Express Service (WES), providing north-south service between Beaverton and Wilsonville. Commuter rail generally provides connections between central cities and suburbs, with service oriented toward commuting; WES operates in the mornings and the early evenings, but not the middle of the day.⁸ Amtrak Cascades, although designed to serve regional intercity travel, is also used by commuters in the Willamette Valley.

⁷ Federal Transit Administration. 2015. *National Transit Database Glossary: 2014 Reporting Year*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/Glossaries/pdf/Glossary2014.pdf>. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Office of Budget and Policy. February.

⁸ Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet). 2016. *WES Commuter Rail: Route Map and Stations*. Available at <http://trimet.org/wes/>.



2.1.3 Streetcar

Streetcar is a rail transit mode that in Oregon usually operates on streets mixed in with traffic.⁹ While streetcars cannot deviate from the rails, the operator of the streetcar “drives” the streetcar along with vehicle traffic that may also operate in the same lane as the streetcar. Streetcar service typically operates in the densest parts of downtowns, on relatively short lines. Because streetcars operate in mixed traffic, they can experience delay due to vehicle congestion. They are typically implemented in highly urbanized areas that have many trip origins and destinations in close proximity. Streetcar service in Oregon is only found in Portland. TriMet and the City of Portland, in conjunction with Portland Streetcar, Inc., a nonprofit corporation, run the streetcar, currently operating three routes.

2.1.4 Bus Rapid Transit

BRT is a bus mode “in which the majority of the line operates in separated right-of-way,”¹⁰ meaning it can avoid congestion on other roadways. BRT is considered HCT. The FTA typically requires that at least 50 percent of the BRT route is in its own dedicated guideway (and not mixed with vehicle traffic) to fund a project. BRT typically costs much less to implement than light rail. It is quicker than conventional bus service when operated in exclusive guideways, and provides the ability to move large numbers of people in urban areas. While light rail is a viable option in highly populated areas, BRT can be implemented effectively in medium-sized or lower density urban areas because of its lower costs and reduced barriers to implementation.

BRT is currently only offered in the Eugene-Springfield metro area, now accounting for about one quarter of Lane Transit District’s (LTD’s) total ridership.¹¹ Currently, LTD operates 16 miles (round trip distance) of BRT and is constructing a 9.2-mile BRT extension that is scheduled to open in 2017.



LTD was one of the first public transportation providers in the nation to develop a “true” BRT system, called EmX

⁹ Federal Transit Administration. 2015. *National Transit Database Glossary: 2014 Reporting Year*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/Glossaries/pdf/Glossary2014.pdf>. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Office of Budget and Policy. February.

¹⁰ Federal Transit Administration. 2015. *National Transit Database Glossary: 2014 Reporting Year*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/Glossaries/pdf/Glossary2014.pdf>. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Office of Budget and Policy. February.

¹¹ Federal Transit Administration. 2015. *National Transit Database Glossary: 2014 Reporting Year*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/Glossaries/pdf/Glossary2014.pdf>. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Office of Budget and Policy. February.

2.1.5 Fixed-Route Bus

Conventional fixed-route buses run on set schedules and provide predictable service along specific travel routes. Fixed-route bus service is offered in many communities throughout the state.

Fixed-route bus services are diverse. Providers throughout the state offer varying number of routes and service frequencies depending on the community. Urban transit agencies, like TriMet, Cherriots (Salem-Keizer Mass Transit District), and LTD offer multiple fixed-route lines, many with frequent service (15 minutes or less depending on the time of day). Smaller agencies may operate one or a few fixed-route lines. Woodburn Transit operates one fixed-route line that serves most of the city with one hour service frequencies. Another example, Basin Transit operates six fixed-route lines (Figure 2-1) serving much of the city of Klamath Falls, including downtown and key community destinations.

Fixed-route buses work well in communities with higher population densities, which have defined travel corridors with multiple origins or destinations along the route, as these conditions support higher ridership and cost-effective provision of service for the community. For this reason, fixed-route service is less typical in very small communities or rural areas of Oregon because it is costly to provide where residents and destinations are dispersed. In addition, lack of adequate pedestrian infrastructure in many parts of both urban and rural Oregon, may be a physical barrier for people with disabilities and older adults that can limit their access to fixed route public transit bus stops. As a result, these riders may have to use demand responsive service, which have much higher operating costs than fixed route service.

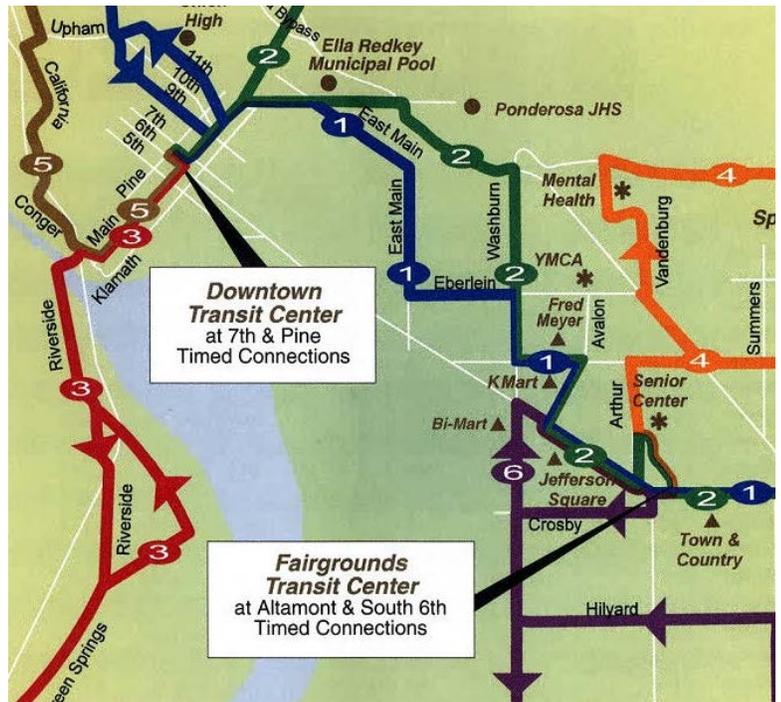


Figure 2-1. Basin Transit's Fixed-Route System in Klamath Falls



2.1.6 Demand-response

Demand-response is a type of public transportation service that provides shared ride, origin to destination, service. Typically, demand-response picks up and drops off riders at or near the location of their choosing.

Demand-response does not follow a specific route but instead operates in a specific service area. A variety of vehicles may be used with this service, including passenger cars, vans, and small buses.

Demand-response is designed to be flexible. Some agencies design their services to target the specific needs of people who are older and people with disabilities; others primarily serve the general public. Demand response service design includes “hybrids” that combine features from both fixed route and demand response. Some agencies provide deviated fixed route service on their regular routes which allows riders to request, through advanced reservations, minor route variation for pick up or drop off (see Case Study 1¹²). Demand-response generally has a much higher cost per trip than fixed-route buses or rail service because it generally has lower ridership. Demand-response trips tend to cost from two to ten times more than regular fixed route service. In 2008, research determined that fixed route service in Oregon urban areas tended to be about \$3 per trip; in rural areas such service had a median cost of over \$8 per trip while the cost to provide demand response trips varied from \$11 to \$26 per trip¹³.

However, each transit service has conditions where it works best. Demand-response in rural communities can be more cost efficient than fixed-route service. Rural areas have fewer riders than populous urban areas and riders’ homes and destinations tend to be more dispersed. The flexibility of demand response service allows riders to be picked up and dropped off at or near their preferred location and agencies can use smaller, less costly vehicles to transport riders.

Case Study 1— Cherriot’s West Salem Connector combines elements of fixed-route service and demand-response, with the goal of providing a more cost-effective service. The West Salem Connector replaced fixed-route service that had low ridership and was expensive. With the Connector, riders book their trip in advance, and then wait at one of several designated pick-up points in the service area. Riders can travel directly to their destination if it is within the Connector service area, or they can connect to Cherriot’s regular fixed-route service to complete their trips.



Book a Trip

Book a trip in advance on your smartphone, tablet or computer at book.cherriots.org. You can also call 503-361-7551.



Wait at Intersection

Arrive at the intersection of your chosen Connector point by the start of your 10 minute pickup window. When we’re on our way, we’ll notify you via text, call or email (your choice).



Share Your Ride

Rides are shared with your neighbors in West Salem. Other riders will be picked up and dropped off along your route.

¹² Cherriots (Salem-Keizer Transit) at <http://cherriots.org/en/connector>, accessed June 2016.

¹³ Dill and Neal, 2008. “Needs, Costs, and Funding Alternatives for Transportation Services for Older Adults and People with Disabilities in Urban and Rural Oregon” page XV. Accessed at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/PT/resources/research-studies/special-needs-transit.pdf>.

There are three main types of demand-response services operating in Oregon:

- **General public demand-response**—This service is open to anyone within the service area. General public demand-response is offered in urban and rural areas alike and may be the only public transportation available in some small and rural communities.
- **Paratransit**—This service is available to certain community members, such as veterans, people who are older, or people who have disabilities. These services are often provided by nonprofits or other community organizations, such as senior centers.
- **Complementary paratransit**—Providers that offer fixed-route service must also provide a comparable level of demand response service, called complementary paratransit, to qualified individuals with disabilities who cannot use the fixed-route system, per the Americans with Disabilities Act.¹⁴

2.1.7 Intercity Public Transportation

Intercity transit includes bus and passenger rail systems that link towns, cities, metropolitan regions, and rural areas throughout the state. It connects Oregon travelers within the state, to other states, and to national and international transportation options. ODOT maintains a Key Performance Measure related to intercity passenger service that measures the percent of Oregon communities of 2500 or more people with intercity bus or rail passenger service. The target for this measure is 95 percent as stated in the Oregon Transportation Plan; as of 2015, 94 percent of such communities had intercity passenger service. This percentage has held steady since about 2012¹⁵. See the Long Distance Transportation Network map on the next page for the various services that make up Oregon’s long-distance transportation network.

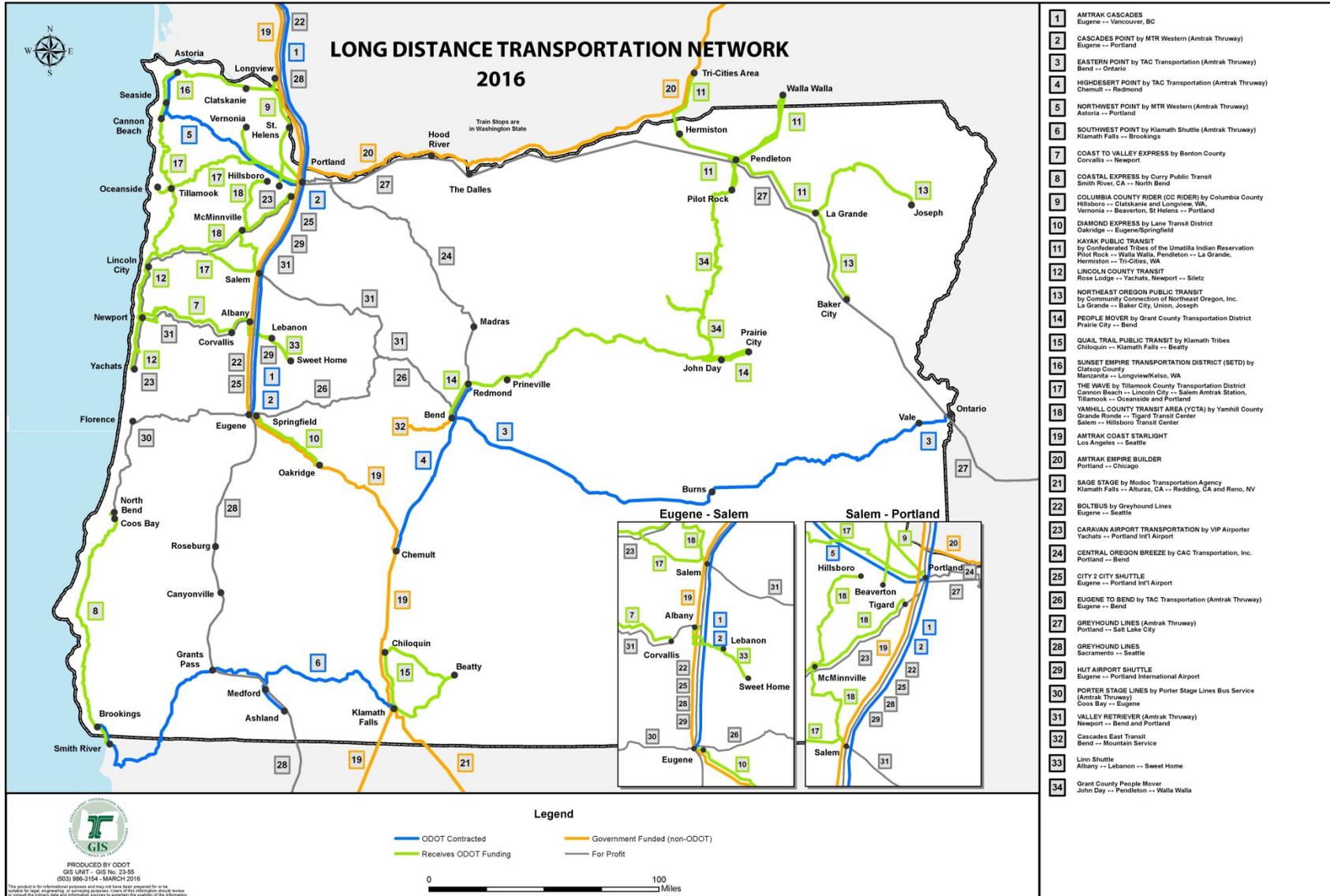
Note that the federal definition of intercity public transportation is specific and not always intuitive: “regularly scheduled bus service for the general public that operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not in close proximity, that has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and that makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available”¹⁶. For example, the federal definition does not include commuter bus service. Therefore, while most riders would think of services like the Wilsonville-Salem route as intercity, this is a commuter service and does not meet the federal definition of intercity service. Consequences of this fact are that this service, and others like it, do not qualify for federal intercity program funding and must be funded through other program funds in competition with other local services. Likewise, since the definition refers to bus service, federal intercity program funds cannot be used for passenger rail services like Cascades.

¹⁴See: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/part-37-transportation-services-individuals-disabilities>

¹⁵ ODOT Rail and Public Transit Division, “Intercity Passenger Service” August, 2016.

¹⁶ FTA, 2014 from [FTA Circular 9040.1G, Chapter I\(4\)\(o\)](#)

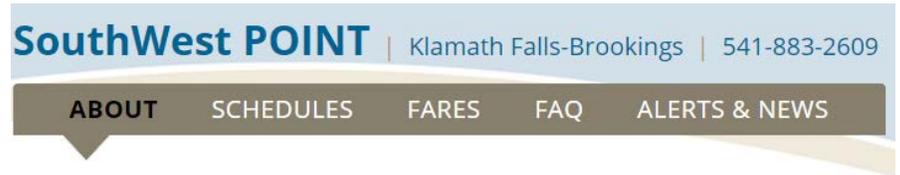




- Intercity Bus

Intercity bus providers comprise a mix of public and private entities working separately, or in partnership, to deliver transit services. Examples include Public Oregon Intercity Transit (POINT), Central Oregon Breeze, Amtrak, and Valley Retriever Buslines, as well as intercity transit provided by local agencies, like the NxNW Connector. These providers typically operate fixed-route services that link rural areas to urban destinations and major transportation hubs around the state. Private national providers include Greyhound and Bolt Bus. The large national bus carriers serve the larger communities along Interstates 5 (I-5) and 84 (I-84). These tend to have more riders and therefore these routes are more profitable for private companies.

The POINT service contracted and funded by ODOT provides intercity connections to other areas of the state that are no longer served by national bus carriers (see Case Study 2¹⁷), helping to fill the gaps in the state’s intercity bus system. Most POINT services (except for Cascades) have one or two departures per day. Therefore, these services do help to connect people in rural towns with larger markets and with other public transportation connections. However, it is very basic service that does not always work for medical appointments, for example, and with long distances to cover and minimal staff, coordinating connections between routes and services can be challenging. In addition, while some may try to ride these services to access employment, these are long-distance routes and not intended for commuting.



Case Study 2—SouthWest POINT is one of five intercity transit routes administered by ODOT. The POINT service is funded through federal dollars and service is intended to fill some of the intercity bus gaps between communities that exist across the state. Since federal deregulation in the early 1980s, private intercity bus carriers, like Greyhound, have reduced the number of routes in Oregon and throughout the nation. SouthWest POINT helps to fill one of these intercity gaps, connecting Klamath Falls, Oregon, to Crescent City, California. Another key factor of the service is the connection to Amtrak in Klamath Falls. This service proves that intercity transit is not just important for interregional travel—it also supports the interstate travel needs of Oregonians.

¹⁷ Oregon Department of Transportation at http://www.oregon-point.com/sw_point.php, accessed June 2016.



- Intercity Passenger Rail

Amtrak provides three intercity passenger rail routes in Oregon as part of the national rail system. The Cascades is an intercity service with multiple trips per day that runs north-south along the Eugene to Vancouver, B.C. corridor. Then there are two long distance Amtrak routes that serve Oregon: the Coast Starlight runs north-south through California, Oregon (approximately parallel to Highways 97 and 35, and I-5 through the northern part of the state), and Washington State and links Los Angeles with Seattle; and the Empire Builder runs east-west and links Portland and Chicago (its only Oregon stop is Portland).

Amtrak bears full responsibility for operation of the Empire Builder and the Coast Starlight, with costs covered by a combination of fare revenues and federal support. The Cascades route is designated a high speed rail corridor, and the federal government classifies it as shorter corridor train service (less than 750 miles in length). In 2013, Section 209 of PRIIA¹⁸ fully shifted financial responsibility for shorter routes, such as the Cascades, from the federal government to the states. It is now funded by the states of Washington and Oregon and by passenger fares. The Cascades service provides a critical link that serves the congested I-5 corridor. Figure 2-2 shows that while Cascade ridership generally grew throughout the 2000s, it has recently fallen due to lower gas prices, schedule changes, and service reliability issues (mainly stemming from shared rail tracks with freight trains which cause slower speeds in some segments of the track). Cascades ridership has recently improved again: January 2016 ridership is 6% higher than in January 2015 (10% higher in the Oregon segment).

Many Oregon public transportation providers are interested in improved connections between intercity and local transportation services as well as linking their local services with neighboring services to improve intercity regional transportation for riders.^{19, 20} For example, NxNW Connector is a consortium of five coastal and northwest Oregon transit agencies. Through collaboration, they coordinate transfers and offer a pass program (good on any of the five agencies' buses) to help make seamless transit connections between the Willamette Valley and coastal cities like Tillamook



Figure 2-2. Amtrak Cascade Ridership

¹⁸See: <http://www.highspeed-rail.org/pages/priasection209.aspx>

¹⁹ Oregon Department of Transportation. 2015. *Oregon Public Transportation Plan Provider Survey*. October 2015.

²⁰ Oregon Public Transportation Association (OPTA). 2015. Oregon Public Transportation Plan Conference materials and feedback. Eugene, Oregon. October 15.

and Astoria.²¹ Improved coordination among local transit providers can improve intercity and regional connections for riders in all areas of the state.

2.2 Ridership and Service Trends

Though each mode is discussed separately above, it is important to note that these modes are all linked together, and with other transportation facilities, to function as a system. Safe, convenient, and well-connected pedestrian and bicycle facilities are integral to making public transportation work well for riders, in addition to park and rides and other facilities that ensure riders can easily and safely reach their transit station or stop. Other government-supported transportation services such as pupil transportation, non-emergency medical transportation, and transportation services offered by social service agencies are also part of a community's transportation system. It is important that public transportation providers and these agencies work together to coordinate services and resources, as feasible.

Ridership and service trends help show how Oregon transit usage and riders have changed over time. Based on analysis of data from the National Transit Database (NTD),²² use of public transportation in Oregon has increased steadily over the last 20 years. Most of the increase in ridership has occurred in urban areas, which account for 96 percent of all passenger trips statewide—urban transit passenger trips have increased 92 percent since 1990.

Information related to rural transit is more limited, although data indicate a 14 percent decrease in rural passenger trips for paratransit and fixed-route bus trips combined between 2000 and 2013. This decrease may be due to service cutbacks, changes in transportation preferences, or other factors.²³ Table 2-1 shows trip trends for major public transportation modes in urban areas.

Table 2-1. Unlinked Passenger Trips by Mode in Urban Areas

Mode	1990 (in millions)	2000 (in millions)	2013 (in millions)	Percent Change (1990 to 2013)
Light rail	6.4	24.4	39.2	513%
Demand-response	0.6	1.8	2.8	367%
Bus rapid transit	--	--	2.7	--
Fixed-route bus	57.7	77.2	76.2	32%

Note: These counts represent the number of persons getting on and off transit vehicles. If a rider transferred buses to complete their trip, then this would be counted as two "unlinked" trips.

Source: Federal Transit Administration. 2013. *National Transit Database*. Available at

²¹ Connector Alliance. Undated. *North by Northwest Connector*. Available at <http://www.nworegontransit.org/>.

²² NTD is one of the most comprehensive available sources for information related to transit statistics, but rural NTD data are incomplete for the years 1990 and 2000 because of data gathering changes. Additionally, only those public transportation providers that receive federal funds are required to submit data to the NTD, meaning some services' statistics are not included in the database.

²³ Federal Transit Administration. 2013. *National Transit Database*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov/>.



Table 2-1. Unlinked Passenger Trips by Mode in Urban Areas

Mode	1990 (in millions)	2000 (in millions)	2013 (in millions)	Percent Change (1990 to 2013)
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<http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/>.

Trips on fixed-route service constitute the majority of trips on public transportation statewide. Fixed-route bus service, as measured by revenue miles and revenue hours decreased slightly between 1990 and 2013, likely because of major investments in other public transportation services. In Portland and Eugene, some fixed-route bus routes have been modified or replaced by high capacity transit such as light rail, streetcar, and BRT. Light rail trips have increased the most of any public transportation mode in the last two decades, growing by more than 500 percent between 1990 and 2013, largely because of major expansion to the Portland region’s light rail system. Since 1998, 44 miles of light rail have been added to the system.

Revenue miles are miles travelled by a public transportation vehicle when picking up and dropping off passengers

Revenue hours are the number of hours of service where public transportation vehicles are picking up and dropping off passengers

Demand-response service has also significantly increased since 1990. Complementary paratransit, which was required of agencies providing fixed-route buses starting in the early 1990s, represents a significant share of this increase. Since 1990, total urban demand-response trips have more than quadrupled to approximately three million trips per year.

Aerial tram and streetcar service, currently exclusive to Portland, together in 2013, provided more than 5.4 million trips. In 2013, the Portland Streetcar provided more than 3.8 million passenger trips and travelled more than 620,000 revenue miles.

According to available data, trips taken on public transportation have grown by more than 90 percent over the last 20 years, while revenue hours and revenue miles have grown by 54 percent and 36 percent, respectively.²⁴ During the same time period, Oregon’s population grew by about 40 percent, indicating more Oregonians are riding public transportation, and public transportation, overall, has become more efficient with more passengers per unit of service.

²⁴ Ibid.

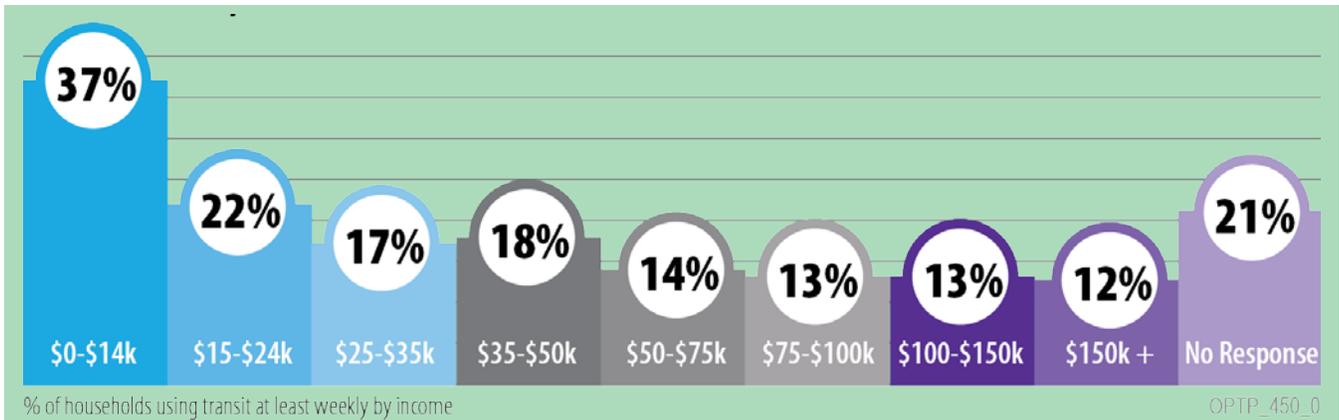


Figure 2-3. Income of Households Using Transit Weekly

Source: Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). 2012. *Oregon Travel and Activity Survey*. Available at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/pages/travelsurvey.aspx>. Oregon Department of Transportation, Transportation Planning and Analysis Unit.

2.2.1 Riders

Many Oregonians choose public transportation to meet their travel needs, whether they ride the bus a few times per year or commute to work every day. Twenty percent of Oregon households have individuals who use transit at least once per week. Nearly 40 percent of households with an income of \$14,000 or less use public transportation weekly, while about 12 percent of those with an income greater than \$150,000 per year use public transportation weekly (Figure 2-3). These figures show that public transportation is an essential travel mode, regardless of income level. Importantly, public transportation provides a travel option for many; not everyone uses public transportation every day, but its presence in communities allows for choices for Oregonians. As an example, it is estimated that in 2013, 74 percent of adults in the Portland metro region rode TriMet at least once in the previous year.²⁵

Some Oregonians use public transportation at greater rates than others. Following are some examples:

- About 20 percent of adults over age 65 use transit regularly, compared to 5 percent of the population as a whole.
- About 30 percent of adults, who are students (age 25 to 44), use transit regularly.
- Minority individuals are also more likely to use public transportation. For example, African-American households represent 24 percent of all households that take public transportation weekly, but only about 2 percent of Oregon households.

²⁵ Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet) and DMH Research, Inc. 2013. *Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon*. Available at <http://trimet.org/pdfs/publications/AA-2013-Board-Presentation.pdf>. November.



Case Study 3—While public transportation is used by many to meet daily travel needs, visitors, tourists, and recreationalists are also using transit to get to the airport, head to the coast, or take their bikes up to the mountains. Mt. Hood Express (www.mthoodexpress.com) is one such service, helping to transport skiers and mountain-bikers to their destinations. The Mt. Hood Express features bicycle and ski trailers seasonally, while also serving the daily travel needs of communities along US 26 east of Sandy.



Photo: Clackamas County

Oregonians make many trips by public transportation (see Case Study 3)—taking more than 120 million trips by the various transit modes in 2013²⁶—they also express support for public transportation services in their communities. According to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) 2013 *Oregon Transportation Needs and Issues Survey*,²⁷ 85 percent of respondents indicated that having public transportation services within cities is important, 92 percent said that providing transportation services for people who are elderly and disadvantaged is important, and 80 percent stated that having bus services between cities is important. A majority of Oregonians value public transportation service—whether they themselves use it every day, once a week, or not at all.

2.2.2 Demographic Trends Affecting Public Transportation Service and Ridership

Ridership on public transportation, as well as public transportation services, is influenced by a number of factors and trends. These trends are important to understand because they will affect Oregonians' transportation choices and provision of transit service in the coming years, as well as help shape policy. This section reviews these major trends.

2.2.2.1 Population Growth in Urban and Rural Areas

Oregon has grown by about one million people since the last OPTP was adopted in 1997.²⁸ By 2040, the state's population is forecast to increase by another 35 percent, resulting in a population of more than 5.2 million.²⁹ Most of this growth will be

85 percent of Oregonians believe having public transportation services within cities is important.

²⁶ Federal Transit Administration, 2013. *National Transit Database*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov>.

²⁷ The Transportation Needs and Issues Survey is conducted approximately every 2 years to assess Oregonians' perceptions of the transportation system, understand how the systems is used, and to identify transportation-related concerns. The most recent surveys have been conducted via web and mail survey modes to over 5,000 households.

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). 2015. *FY 2015 Oregon Transportation Needs and Issues Survey: Summary of Statewide Results*. Final Report.SPR-043. Available at http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP_RES/docs/Reports/2015/TNIS2015Final_v06.pdf. January.

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. 2013. *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2009 – 2013*. Oregon Department of Administrative Services, Office of Economic Analysis.

²⁹ Oregon Office of Economic Analysis. 2015. *Demographic Forecast*. Available at <http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/oea/Pages/demographic.aspx>. Oregon State Department of Administrative Services, Office of Economic Analysis.

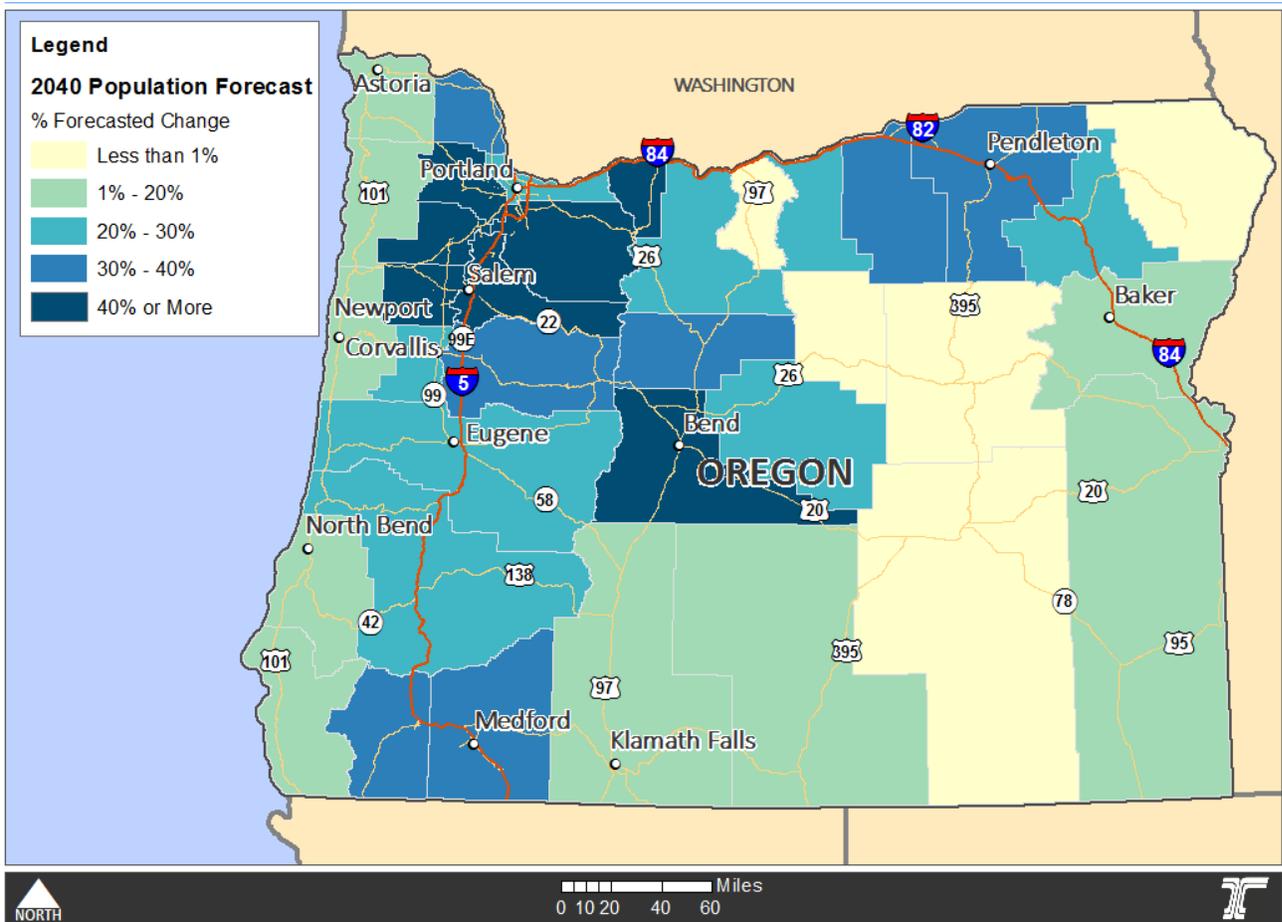


Figure 2-4. Population Forecast by County, 2013-2040

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2013. *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2009 – 2013*. Oregon Department of Administrative Services, Office of Economic Analysis.

concentrated in the Willamette Valley, Bend and Medford areas, and Columbia, Umatilla and Morrow Counties (Figure 2-4).

Population growth is one of the most important factors affecting the need for all types of transportation, including public transportation. Census data show that population growth in Oregon's urban areas, including the Portland, Corvallis, Bend, Eugene-Springfield, Medford, and Salem metro areas, outpaced growth in rural areas by more than 40 percent since 1990. Deschutes County, home to Bend, grew the most of any county since 1990, more than doubling in population to 157,000.³⁰

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. 2012. *Oregon 2010: Population and Housing Unit Counts*. 2010 Census of Population and Housing. Available at <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/cph-2-39.pdf>. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau. August



As urban areas become more densely populated, the need for public transportation services is likely to increase—greater availability and frequency of service in urban areas, in addition to other factors like the cost of parking, can make it an attractive alternative to driving.³¹

While urban areas are anticipated to grow the most in terms of absolute population, most rural areas are also anticipated to grow, although at somewhat slower rates, and growth is anticipated to be in “urban clusters” within the rural areas; urban clusters are small cities and towns of 15,000 to 50,000 population.³² As in urban areas, rural population growth will increase the need for public transportation services. According to survey data, rural riders use transit for the same reasons urban riders do—to get to work, shopping, or school, meaning public transportation services will be required to meet a variety of needs.³³

In addition, public transportation will continue to provide an essential transportation option and serve as a mobility lifeline for people who choose not to, or cannot, drive a car due to age, income, or disability; these Oregonians are disproportionately located in rural areas. For example, counties with fewer than 50,000 people make up just 10 percent of Oregon’s total population, but these same counties are home to thirteen percent of individuals with a physical disability that prevents them from driving, as well as thirteen percent of the state’s 65-and-over population (Figure 2-5).³⁴ If these population growth trends in rural counties continue, it will likely increase the need for services for older Oregonians and people with disabilities.

³¹ Transportation Research Board. 2007. *Elements Needed to Create High Ridership Systems*. Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 111. Available at http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_111.pdf. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Transportation Research Board.

³² Transportation Research and Education Center, interim data for rural transit needs study (unpublished, 2016)

³³ Small Urban and Rural Transit Center. 2015. *Rural Transit Fact Book 2015*. Available at <http://www.surtc.org/transitfactbook/downloads/2015-rural-transit-fact-book.pdf>. Prepared by Jeremy Mattson, North Dakota State University, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, Fargo, ND. June.

³⁴ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). 2015. *Census Transportation Planning Package Profile 2015: Environmental Justice Profiles by County*. 2009-2013 American Community Survey. Available at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/american_community_survey/products/2013_ej_transportation_profiles/index.cfm. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Planning, Environmental, and Realty. Updated October 9.

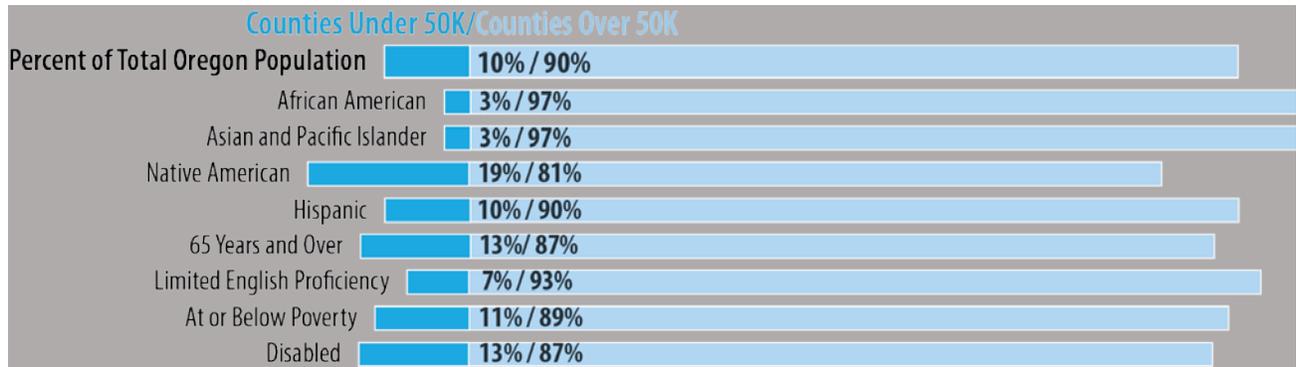


Figure 2-5. Share of Select Population Groups in Counties under 50,000 People versus Counties over 50,000 People

2.2.2.2 Shifting Travel Preferences

Nationally, millennials (individuals born between the early 1980s to the 2000s) appear to be multimodal, preferring to live in urban areas where transportation options are available. As the largest, single population group at 27 percent of the population³⁵, and with most millennials now entering adulthood, the preferences of this generation may have an outsized influence on transportation into the future. An American Public Transportation Association (APTA) survey of millennials in metro locations across the country, including Portland, showed that about 40 percent of millennials use public transit a few times a week or more, which is a higher rate than the general population.³⁶

Oregon's aging population will also influence the need for public transportation and the types of services required. First, census data show that in 2014, 16³⁷ percent of Oregon's population was 65 years and older, with older adults set to represent a greater share of the population in years to come. Second, older adults tend to use public transportation more frequently and many are also interested in "aging in place." Older adults in Oregon are likely to live in rural areas (21 percent) compared to urban areas (14 percent) and many intend to stay in their homes as long as they are able.³⁸ Third, national census data show that 75 percent of baby boomers live in suburban or rural areas. These three conditions will likely lead to an increased need for demand-response services and other public transportation services, often in suburban and rural areas, where it is more costly to provide public transportation. APTA concludes that transportation providers will need to expand paratransit and other general demand-response services, modify system and vehicle design, and provide better information to older adults about transportation options to meet these needs.^{39, 40}

³⁵ Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, 2015. "Population, demographics and Generations. Retrieved 2/1/2015. Accessed at <http://oregoneconomicanalysis.com/2015/02/05/population-demographics-and-generations>.

³⁶ American Public Transportation Association (APTA). 2013. *Millennials & Mobility: Understanding the Millennial Mindset*. Available at <http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Millennials-and-Mobility.pdf>. April.

³⁷ U.S. Census. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/41>. Accessed 5/31/2015.

³⁸ DeGood, K. 2011, *Aging in Place, Stuck without Options: Baby Boomer Generation*. Accessed June 29, 2015.

³⁹ American Public Transportation Association (APTA). 2010. *Funding the Public Transportation Needs of an Aging Population*. Available at http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/TCRP_J11_Funding_Transit_Needs_of_Aging_Population.pdf. March.



2.2.2.3 Minority and Low-Income Populations

Low-income households, minorities, people with disabilities, and limited English proficiency (LEP) are groups that are more likely to use public transportation.⁴¹ The number of Oregonians who are racial or ethnic minorities is growing, likely resulting in increased use of public transportation if their rate of use remains similar to today.⁴² According to Census data, the number of minority residents has grown 35 percent between 1990 and 2013, with growth concentrated in the Portland metro area.

In the 2014 Oregon Workforce Report⁴³, low wage work is defined as occupations that pay a median wage of \$12 per hour or \$25,000 annually or less. The report also finds that over 400,000 Oregonians have low-wage work and workers outside the Portland metro area are more likely to work in low-wage jobs. At the same time, the Portland metro area's population density means that it has the most transit services.

In addition, changes in housing prices and incomes also affect where low wage and low income households can live. As some Oregon cities or areas grow quickly, housing prices may also increase quickly, causing low wage workers to move to lower cost housing. This may mean that these workers are now farther from jobs and from the most thorough transit service in their area. For example, in Multnomah County, rising housing prices in Portland's inner east side have caused low income households to move to outer east Portland and to eastern suburbs. From 2000-2010 housing prices increased throughout Portland west of I-205 but stayed the same or declined east of the freeway⁴⁴. At the same time, in outer east Portland almost one quarter of residents are at or below the federal poverty level whereas inner east Portland and north Portland have poverty rates of 17-18 percent⁴⁵.

While public transportation is provided for the benefit of all Oregonians, the propensity for individuals who are minorities or low income to use public transportation at a greater rate is an important consideration for current and future service planning for all providers. At the same time the growth of these populations and their locations may add pressure to transit agencies to add or change services to address the growing need for transportation options.

⁴⁰ Coughlin, J.F. 2009. "Longevity, Lifestyle, and Anticipating the New Demands of Aging on the Transportation System." Available at <http://web.mit.edu/coughlin/Public/Publications/Coughlin,%20Longevity,%20Lifestyle%20&%20Future%20Transportation%20PWMP%20April%2009.pdf>. *Public Works and Policy* 13:4, pp. 301-311. April.

⁴¹ Lyons, W. Peckett, H., Moose, L. Khurana, M. & Nash, L. (October 12, 2012). Metropolitan Area Transportation Planning for Healthy communities. Retrieved June 29, 2015, from http://WWW.planning.dot.gov/document/Volpe_FHWA_MPOHealth12122012.pdf.

⁴² Office of Economic Analysis, State of Oregon. *Oregon's Demographic Trends*. 2011, Accessed at http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OEA/docs/demographics/or_pop_trend2011.pdf.

⁴³ University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center, 2014. "The High Cost of Low Wages in Oregon" page 4, accessed at <http://lerc.uoregon.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2014-Oregon-Workforce-Report-The-High-Cost-of-Low-Wages-in-Oregon.pdf>

⁴⁴ Multnomah County Department of County Human Services, 2014, "Poverty in Multnomah County" page 36, accessed at <https://multco.us/file/34343/download>.

⁴⁵ Ibid. page 4

SECTION 3

Public Transportation Providers and Ridership

The public transportation system in Oregon is a complex network of services provided by a diverse group of providers from both the private and public sectors. Many transit agencies, local governments, nonprofits and private sector providers such as Amtrak and Greyhound Bus provide public transportation services to the state's residents and visitors. Understanding the various types and nature of public transportation providers in the state can help illuminate similarities, differences, connections and gaps in the provision of public transportation service. For the development of the OPTP it was decided to organize provider information into six categories as listed below based on the size of the community served. Not all providers fit precisely into one of these categories; some providers will be partially reflected in more than one category, but this general organization is useful in understanding how different providers deliver their service and what issues and challenges they face today.

- **Large urban providers**— serve areas with population of 200,000 or greater
- **Medium-sized urban area providers**—serve areas with population between 50,000 and 200,000
- **Small urban area providers**—serve areas with population between 10,000 and 50,000
- **Large county and regional system providers**—serve counties with population greater than 50,000 and public transportation systems that serve multiple counties
- **Small county and rural community providers**—serve counties with population under 50,000 and small communities with population less than 10,000
- **Statewide public transportation** – intercity bus and passenger rail serves statewide

Notable differences among these groups of providers are related to the population and form of the community they serve. The larger communities and urban providers offer the widest variety of services in the state, have implemented robust transit technologies, and must negotiate urban congestion and environments to deliver service. Small county providers face radically different circumstances. Many only have demand-response service, sometimes operated by all-volunteer drivers that serve relatively few customers and requires travelling long distances to meet riders' travel needs. Intercity bus and passenger rail service connects the public transportation system across the state and links to areas outside the state. Larger providers typically implement a wide variety of transit technologies including vehicle-related, infrastructure-related, and computer based enhancements, while smaller providers use fewer technologies based on need and the lack of resources to implement them. Revenue sources widely differ, with some providers reliant on state and federal funds for more than half of their budgets, particularly in rural areas, larger



providers relying more on fares and other local sources, while private resources are used for some intercity services.

3.1 Provider Categories

Understanding the general characteristics of each category is important to understanding the issues and challenges faced by individual providers. Though each provider is unique, most have much in common with peer agencies serving similar communities and populations. The size of the public transportation provider (in terms of the number of people served or annual budget) and the size and form of the community served (metropolitan region, rural county, and others) strongly affects the types of services offered in each community and influences the challenges, issues, and opportunities that individual providers face.

3.1.1 Large Urban Transit Providers

Large urban transit providers serve areas of the state with urban area population greater than 200,000. Three providers in Oregon meet this definition: TriMet in the Portland metro area, Cherriots in the Salem metro area, and Lane Transit District (LTD) in the Eugene-Springfield metro area. Together they provide about 95 percent of the transit trips in the state.⁴⁶ TriMet is the largest provider in the state, serving a population of about 1.5 million, while LTD and Cherriots each serve similar populations of about 350,000. The large urban providers also serve some rural areas and small communities beyond their urban service areas.

3.1.2 Medium-Sized Urban Providers

Within Oregon, there are three medium-sized urban providers serving communities of about 50,000 to 200,000 people: the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD), Corvallis Transit System (CTS), and Albany Transit System (ATS). This is a diverse group, with RVTD serving the Rogue Valley urban area, and CTS and ATS serving medium-sized cities. These providers offer a variety of transit services, including fixed-route and demand-response services. From 2011 to 2013, medium-sized urban transit entities provided an average of about 1.8 million fixed-route bus trips per year, travelling more than 2.7 million revenue miles.⁴⁶

3.1.3 Small Urban Providers

Small urban providers serve city populations between about 10,000 and 50,000 and include the cities of Woodburn, Sandy, Cottage Grove, and Canby, as well as others. These providers typically operate services within their cities and offer connections with neighboring public transportation services. Sandy Area Metro, for example, provides local service to and within the city of Sandy in addition to connections to the neighboring cities including Gresham, where passengers may transfer to TriMet service.

⁴⁶ Oregon Department of Transportation. 2013. *OPTIS—Oregon Public Transit Information System*. Available at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/PT/Pages/resources/optis.aspx>. Oregon Department of Transportation, Public Transit Division.

Table 3-1. General Characteristics of Public Transportation Providers in Oregon

Typology	Typical Population Size	Examples of Providers (not inclusive of all providers)	Types of Services Offered	
Large urban	More than 200,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TriMet • Lane Transit District • Cherriots • WES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aerial tram • Commuter rail • Commuter bus • Light rail • Vanpool • Intercity bus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetcar • Bus Rapid Transit • Fixed-route service • Demand-response (including paratransit, complementary paratransit) • Intercity rail
Medium sized urban	50,000 to 200,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) • City of Corvallis Transit System (CTS) • Albany Transit System (ATS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercity rail • Intercity bus • Fixed-route service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand-response (including paratransit, complementary paratransit, dial-a-ride)
Small urban	10,000 to 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Woodburn • City of Sandy • City of Cottage Grove • Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercity bus • Fixed-route service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand-response (including paratransit, complementary paratransit, dial-a-ride)
Large county and regional	Counties with more than 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yamhill Transportation Service Area • Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indians • Cascade East Transit • Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercity bus • Fixed-route service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand-response (including paratransit, complementary paratransit, dial-a-ride)
Small county and rural	Counties with less than 50,000, and cities less than 10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tillamook County Transportation District • Sunset Empire Transportation District • City of Silverton • Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercity bus • Fixed-route service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand-response (including paratransit, complementary paratransit, dial-a-ride)
Statewide Transportation	Statewide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greyhound • Amtrak Cascades • POINT • Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercity rail • Intercity bus 	



3.1.4 Large County and Regional Systems

Large county and regional system providers serve counties with populations greater than 50,000. Service areas are often rural and providers can serve multiple counties. For example, Yamhill County Transit Area provides public transportation for all of Yamhill County, and connects with TriMet, Tillamook County Transportation District, and Salem Keizer Transit.⁴⁷ Similarly, the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council operates Cascades East Transit, which serves the Bend urban area and three rural counties, connecting the communities of Redmond, Prineville, Madras, Sisters, La Pine, and Warm Springs.

3.1.5 Small County and Rural Community Systems

Small county and rural system providers serve counties with populations less than 50,000, and cities less than 10,000. They often serve much smaller populations, for example Wheeler County has a population of 1,400. Examples include Harney County, Grant County Transportation District, City of Silverton, and the Klamath Tribe's Quail Trail service. For many of these small county and rural communities, these agencies provide essential transportation services, as few transportation options, other than the personal car, are available. Combined, they provided more than one million passenger trips in 2013.⁴⁸

3.1.6 Statewide and Interstate Public Transportation

Intercity passenger bus service provided by national carriers as private, for-profit, businesses are concentrated along I-5 and I-84 corridors. These services travel long distances, connecting multiple states, and stop at relatively few Oregon communities. Several in-state private carriers, such as Valley Retriever Buslines, also provide valuable connections between, for example, coastal communities to the Willamette Valley and from central Oregon to Portland. To augment these private businesses' services, ODOT has entered into contracts with private sector operators to provide the POINT intercity bus network. The POINT services operate on major highways in rural areas of the state and along the I-5 corridor between Portland and Eugene.

As mentioned above, there are three intercity passenger rail routes serving Oregon. The long distance Coast Starlight and shorter distance Cascades service provide north-south service, and the Empire Builder provides east-west service from Portland to Chicago.

3.2 Summary of Public Transportation Provider Characteristics

Transportation providers across Oregon vary in size and level of service, but often face similar challenges and opportunities. These range from issues dealing with the fleet and technology, managing budgets and funding sources, or measuring performance and coordination through partnerships. This section describes some of the characteristics of providers throughout the state,

⁴⁷ Yamhill County Transit Area. Undated. *Yamhill County Transit Area: The Stretch Limo for the Rest of Us*. Available at <http://www.yctransitarea.org/>.

⁴⁸ Federal Transit Administration, 2013. *National Transit Database*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov>.



as well as opportunities and challenges related to vehicle fleets, operations, technology, and other issues.

3.2.1 Fleet

A fleet of more than 2,000 publicly-owned transit vehicles serve Oregon. Approximately 800 vehicles serve the Portland metro area, 400 serve other urban systems, and 800 serve rural communities. From 2015 to 2020, more than half of the 2000 public transit vehicles ODOT has helped invest in will need replacement to meet the ODOT’s standard for “state of good repair.”⁴⁹ FTA considers maintaining transit systems as one of its highest priorities in order to “help ensure safe, dependable, and accessible service.”⁵⁰

Most of the public transportation vehicles in the state are owned by the three largest transit providers—TriMet, Cherrits, and LTD. The average age of TriMet’s 40-foot bus fleet is 13 years. Many of TriMet’s vehicles may be at, or near, the end of their useful lives (generally 12 years or 500,000 miles for 40-foot buses). RVTD’s 40-foot bus fleet is an average of 12 years old and the average age of its demand-response fleet, comprised of smaller vehicles, is 11.4 years. Fleet age is a particularly significant concern for all providers, given the large capital expense required to maintain and replace the vehicles.

Small urban providers typically operate a mix of smaller capacity vehicles for both fixed route and demand-response services. Fleet replacement is an ongoing challenge—for many agencies as they must balance the cost of transit operations with vehicle replacement. Many agencies must choose to operate the vehicles beyond the defined standards in order to sustain funding for transit operations.

Large county and regional public transportation providers operate smaller fleet sizes between 5 and 30 vehicles, while small county and rural providers generally have between 2 and 24 vehicles. These providers’ fleets tend to include smaller vehicles used for fixed and demand-response service and generally have a shorter useful life.

3.2.2 Technology

Integrating vehicle and mobile technology is a strategy providers use to improve operations, and rider comfort and experience. Transit technologies can also improve service efficiency and may save providers money. Most public transit providers use computer-aided dispatch and scheduling software and “automated passenger counter” systems to assist in improving bus routing and scheduling, resulting in increased number of rides and providing significant improvements in data collection.

⁴⁹ ODOT’s standard is that 60% of transit vehicles in use that are invested in by ODOT are within their useful life in terms of age, miles, and condition.

⁵⁰ FTA “State of Good Repair” website, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/asset-management/state-good-repair>, accessed July 2016.⁵¹ Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD). 2015. *RVTD Launches Realtime Transit App (9/28/2015)*. Available at <http://rvtd.org/news.php?a=detail&id=251>. September 28.



Many providers have "automated vehicle location" systems on their bus fleets, These technologies help provide real-time tracking of bus locations and can update riders of delays and when the next bus or train will arrive. RVTDD, for example, has a real-time transit information application named *OneBusAway*,⁵¹ and CTS has a similar mobile service called *Where's My Bus?* that provides riders with real-time transit information.⁵²

"Efare" refers to newer technologies that allow electronic payment of transit fares. Smart phone apps that allow payment are one example. TriMet is currently developing an efare system that will allow riders to pay fares with a smartcard – the system will make it easier for riders to pay their fare and will cap fares based on use for all riders.

New fare collection technologies are being implemented by TriMet that will allow for flexibility in how riders pay for their bus or train ticket. TriMet is the only agency to have mobile ticketing options and is presently developing a sophisticated efare system that will allow riders to more easily pay for their trip.⁵³ The system is based on "open architecture," meaning it can be easily adapted for other agencies.^{54,55} This open architecture presents an opportunity to share the technology with other providers, reducing the substantial upfront costs that individual providers would experience if they were to develop their own efare systems.

Automated and connected cars, buses, and trains are also being tested and may be a future way of delivering transit in a safe user-friendly and cost efficient way. Technology trends present major opportunities for making the future of public transportation more efficient and easy to use.

According to results of the OPTP provider survey, most small urban transit providers would like to implement web and mobile transit technology enhancements, such as real-time transit scheduling information or efare systems. In the survey, several small urban providers indicated that they rely on telephone systems to communicate up-to-date route and scheduling information to transit users. Providers also indicated that real-time mobile and web technology would free up administrative capacity, as well as improve the overall transit system for users. The primary barrier to implementing these technologies is the cost to procure them and technical capacity to operate and maintain the new technologies.

3.2.3 Funding Sources

Providers rely on diverse funding sources, discussed further in Section 4 of this report, for operations and capital improvements. For example, TriMet and LTD each collect revenue through a payroll tax, while Cherriots has a property tax to fund transit; fare revenue provides a more

⁵¹ Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTDD). 2015. *RVTDD Launches Realtime Transit App (9/28/2015)*. Available at <http://rvtd.org/news.php?a=detail&id=251>. September 28.

⁵² City of Corvallis. Undated. *CTS—Going Your Way: Welcome to Corvallis Transit System*. Bus/Transit System. Available at <http://www.corvallisoregon.gov/index.aspx?page=167>.

⁵³ Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet). Undated. *Mobile Ticketing*. Available at <http://trimet.org/mobiletickets/>.

⁵⁴ Innovation in Traffic Systems AG (iNiT). 2014. *Innovative e-fare System for TriMet in Portland*. Available at http://media.cvgnus.com/files/base/MASS/whitepaper/2014/11/Showcase_Portland_single.pdf. November.

⁵⁵ Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet). Undated. *My Hopcard*. Available at <http://myhopcard.com/>.



significant share of total revenues for TriMet and LTD as compared with nearly all other providers in the state (Table 3-2). Smaller agencies tend to rely more heavily on federal funding. For example, nearly half of the city of Lebanon’s transit system’s operating budget is from federal formula funds.

Most transit agencies depend on discretionary grant funds for capital items such as facilities (bus barns and passenger shelters) and vehicles. Discretionary grants are offered periodically by USDOT and by ODOT. The funds are welcome, but discretionary grants are not predictable and are not always flexible as the criteria frequently direct their use. Other sources of capital funds also include Oregon Transportation Infrastructure Bank and sales of bonds.

Medium-sized urban providers rely on locally-generated funding for most of their operations budgets, typically through a property tax. The property tax rate is set by community direction through elections, and the levy rate can vary significantly from community to community. Fare revenue in these communities usually provides less than ten percent of operating budgets.

Table 3-2. Example Sources of Operations Funding for Select Public Transportation Providers

Agency	Annual Trips (unlinked, millions)	Total Operations Expenditures (\$millions)	Sources of Operations Funding (percent)				
			Fares	Other Local	State	Federal	Other
TriMet	98.9	\$389.8	27%	45%	0%	23%	5%
Cherriots	3.9	\$32.7	8%	26%	16%	48%	2%
City of Lebanon	.04	\$.24	7%	34%	0%	48%	11%
Hood River County Transportation Dist.	.036	\$.68	8%	44%	11%	37%	0%

Source: Federal Transit Administration. 2013. *National Transit Database*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/>.

In a few communities, public transportation is fare-free. Corvallis is one such community, with CTS receiving nearly all of its operational funding from local and federal sources in 2013—48 percent and 45 percent, respectively. CTS became a fareless public transportation service in 2011, made possible by new revenue generated by a Transit Operations Fee, which is a monthly fee collected from all Corvallis utility customers (residences, businesses, and industry). Since its first year of fareless operation in 2012, CTS ridership has increased by more than 37 percent.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Federal Transit Administration, 2013. *National Transit Database*. Available at <http://www.ntdprogram.gov>.



Low farebox revenues and varying levels of local funding mean small county and rural providers, as well as large county and regional providers, often rely on federal dollars as their largest single source of funding. These providers are especially concerned about the long-term stability of federal funding, since they are so reliant on it for their operations. They tend to have extremely limited resources for new vehicles, services, and technologies and devote the great majority of their funds to operations.

3.2.4 Near- and Long-Term Planning

Transit providers engage in planning to different degrees. This is partially dictated by the number and training of staff and the ability to fund and participate in planning exercises. Near- and long-term planning activities are necessary to manage operations and capital investments and create service plans that address anticipated service and financial requirements.

ODOT supports, through policy and funding, planning such as long range (twenty plus years) city and county transportation system plans and metropolitan planning organizations' regional transportation plans which include a transit element. ODOT also supports transit development plans that are ten- to twenty-year transit service delivery plans; and five-year Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans which identify gaps and opportunities for improvements in the delivery of human service transportation, in coordination with public transportation, in a county or region.

In Oregon, local governments, cities, counties and MPOs develop long range TSPs which are multimodal transportation and land use plans. Local jurisdictions address public transportation services as part of the transit element in their local TSP; public transportation providers are included in the planning process. However, there are major disparities in how public transportation is currently included in TSPs, with varying degrees of provider involvement. Larger jurisdictions are generally more successful in ensuring transit provider participation; smaller jurisdictions working with smaller transit agencies are not as successful. Lack of participation is frequently driven by the lack of staff time or planning experience to take part in the process.

Service planning is generally short-term and undertaken by all providers. It includes efforts to maintain or improve operations and rider experience such as adjusting transit frequencies, adding more connections, and encouraging the construction of sidewalks and pedestrian amenities to improve access to public transportation facilities.

Transit agencies of all sizes are increasingly engaged in transit development planning, which provides guidance regarding service changes in anticipation of population changes, purchasing bus fleets, and investment in transit facilities. In Oregon's largest communities, transit agencies planning efforts include preparing for future high-capacity transit corridors, local service enhancement planning, and coordinating with local and regional planning efforts to support the link between land use and transportation. Cherriots, for example, completed a long-range, regional



transit plan in 2013 that identified opportunities to coordinate with other transit systems to reduce duplicative service and make connections easier for riders.⁵⁷

Transit development planning in urban areas is coordinated with regional transportation plans (RTP). RTPs are multimodal long range transportation plans that consider existing and future conditions and assess the services required to meet future projections of a region's transportation system. RTPs are conducted by a metropolitan planning organizations every four or five years, in consultation with public transit agencies, local officials, and the public and are plans for twenty plus years into the future. The plans create a framework for project priorities, including for transit projects. RTPs are required for any urban area with a population of greater than 50,000.

RTPs and transit development plans include performance measures that help assess the progress toward goals or simply year-to-year performance. Detailed information about performance measures can be found in Appendix A.

3.2.5 Local and Statewide Goals

Local governments and agency partners frequently look to public transportation as a tool to accomplish or contribute to a number of local and state goals including environmental health, energy conservation, reducing transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and supporting increased freight mobility. Often, local and regional long range plans cite public transit as a means of reducing overall vehicle emissions to meet air quality goals and improve water quality. Public transportation can add capacity to congested corridors to reduce freight delay and the need for new or expanded roads. Public transportation supports compact land uses patterns and is an efficient means of meeting the travel needs of growing communities. As public transportation almost always requires that users walk or bike to and from their station or stop, it can increase physical activity for users and in turn improve public health. It supports the economy by providing transportation options and helping to manage congestion through the carrying capacity of a single bus or train car.

3.2.6 Service Coordination

Throughout the state, staff at large and small agencies alike note the importance of service coordination to provide connections both within and outside of their service areas and are making efforts to provide links. Coordination efforts can improve the rider experience by making connections seamless and allow riders to complete their trips more quickly; it also benefits providers where facilities can be shared or duplicative services can be modified to reduce costs.

Typically, providers coordinate with regard to linking to neighboring services and scheduling, but coordinating information and simplified trip planning is an opportunity, especially in smaller communities and rural areas. Collaboration with other transportation providers, such as social services, is important to ensure improved client services. For example, Ride Connection is a

⁵⁷ Cherriots (Salem-Keizer Transit). 2013. *Long-Range Regional Transit Plan*. Available at <http://cherriots.org/en/regional-plan>. October.



nonprofit community service organization that coordinates scheduling to find rides among more than thirty providers and administers several fixed-route services in addition to providing individual and group travel training for seniors and people with disabilities to help community members use transit.

Given the large service areas in rural counties, coordination is an important tool for covering the geography and improving intercity connections. Innovative examples include Douglas County's Douglas Rides Community Transportation, a countywide program that consists of seven individual service providers that work in unison under county direction. Douglas County also works to coordinate intercity transit service with Umpqua Transit (U-Trans) to the north.

Transit providers coordinate services with neighboring transit agencies through synchronizing transfers to eliminate long passenger waits, and in some cases, share infrastructure facilities and staff capacity. For example, Salem-Keizer Transit coordinates closely with TriMet and Wilsonville's SMART services to provide quality connections between Salem and the Portland metro region. Within the Portland metro area, TriMet coordinates its service with neighboring transit agencies, sharing some facilities and coordinating transfers with services such as C-TRAN in Clark County, Washington and WES, the commuter rail line serving Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin, and Wilsonville. TriMet provides a link on its website to neighboring transit agencies, including other public transportation services in the Portland metro region.⁵⁸

Another aspect of coordination is between transit providers and other government funded services such as pupil transportation, non-emergency medical transportation and social service agencies that also provide transportation services. A goal of coordination with these agencies is to reduce cost and increase access to community members. It is possible, through collaboration, to develop opportunities to share resources, such as using school buses for after school public transit. Human service agencies, such as veteran's volunteer driver programs, may also take non-veterans to medical appointments, especially if the appointment is at the same facility.

Coordination between public transit agencies and between other transportation providers such as schools, health care providers, and human service agencies supports an integrated and interconnected system which can support greater access to and increased use of public transportation services. This integration can be challenging because of constrained budgets and staffing. To realize the further benefits of coordination to both riders and providers, additional resources are likely needed.

⁵⁸ Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet). Undated. *Other Local Transit Agencies*. Available at <http://trimet.org/schedules/othertransit.htm>.



3.2.7 Operational Issues and Gaps

Public transportation providers are challenged with meeting the many expectations of system users, constituents, transportation stakeholders, leadership, and the general public. This is further complicated by the various services required to respond to the evolving needs of transportation users across the various geographies and populations of Oregon.

Where and How to Serve

Not one transit agency in Oregon is able to meet all of the transportation needs in their community; hard choices must be made. The capacity to plan for and respond to changing transportation needs is compromised by the need to manage the multiple demands and daily considerations of transit providers. All providers must balance their allocation of staff and financial resources to serve disparate needs.

Some expectations and needs of transit users and stakeholders may be in conflict: For example, should the provider focus the majority of effort on service where ridership is high and cost-per-ride is low? If so, that decision may mean that there is less coverage in other areas. Similarly, many transit agencies may focus the majority of their service on peak times when ridership is high, resulting in much less service available to people whose travel needs are at other times of day. Likewise, services designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities and seniors have a high cost-per-ride, and low usage rates, which impacts budget available for service for the general public.

Providers in urban areas with high property values and escalating housing costs face a difficult issue around serving lower-income households, who may need to move away from more expensive areas better-served by transit. This presents an evolving challenge for the agency, which is tasked with serving those who have few transportation options, even as they move farther from core service areas.

A significant challenge for rural transit providers is delivering adequate service in vast, sparsely populated areas. Douglas County, for example, is a large rural county covering more than 5,000 square miles. The population is spread throughout the county, which makes it difficult to serve efficiently. At the same time, there is growing interest from riders Douglas County in commuter and intercity links to metro areas like Portland and Eugene. Evolving and growing need for services in these areas, coupled with competing needs for limited resources leads to unmet needs.

Roadways and Facilities

Providers must be concerned about the physical environment in which transit operates. The majority of transit trips start and end with a walk to or from the bus stop. However, in many Oregon communities or areas within them, walking facilities are either not available or not useable, due to condition or lack of curb ramps and other features that make the path of travel safe and accessible. Lack of sidewalks or other accessible pathways can be a significant barrier to using transit. Demand response transit can bridge the accessibility gap while communities address the



lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Improvements to the sidewalk system can reduce dependence on demand response service, which is estimated by the U.S. Government Accountability Office to cost about \$29.30 per trip, an estimated three and a half times more expensive than the average cost of \$8.15 for a fixed-route trip⁵⁹, annually, about \$15,000 per individual. In the long term, sidewalk, street crossing, and bus stop improvements can lower this continuous operational cost through infrastructure investments targeted to locations adjacent to transit stops.

The roads and street on which transit buses are operated have a large effect on the quality and cost of service. Most transit vehicles operate in mixed traffic: congestion decreases transit reliability, increases travel time, and increases costs just as it does for drivers. Transit planners want the buses to operate using a route that is the most direct path, which are most often the major streets in most communities. Major streets generally have wider lanes, higher speeds, and may have more sidewalks and pedestrian crossings than are found in neighborhoods. A direct path between bus stops costs less as it is more efficient, is usually more reliable, and makes the service more attractive to passengers.

Major streets are the same ones that are also likely to experience traffic congestion. Buses operated on major streets are also subject to congestion, which can be partially mitigated by technology and street design, such as location of the bus stop. Another consideration for location of routes is safety: Buses operated on streets with wider lanes (>11 feet) have fewer vehicle maintenance costs associated with sideswipe and mirror crashes than narrower side streets⁶⁰. Additionally, locating bus stop near places where natural surveillance is available, for example in front of a grocery store, is effective in increasing the passenger's perception of safety.⁶¹

Funds Available

In the face of limited funds available for public transportation, many providers are challenged with meeting the growing needs of their communities. Given that labor costs (salaries) are about 80 percent of operations costs, it is difficult to expand services even when there are adequate numbers of vehicles to do so. Budget issues also result in delaying vehicle replacements, which results in higher mileage vehicles which are more costly to maintain. When vehicles are replaced, they are also often "right-sized" to meet the capacity requirements of the service.

Some providers are only able to offer service during limited times of the day or week; for example, Cherriots does not currently offer weekend service due to limited budgets. In the City of Woodburn, transit services are only available on weekdays with one route with hourly service between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.,⁶² which is what the City can afford to provide. Both of these

⁵⁹ <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-17> Accessed August 2, 2016

⁶⁰ <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/transit/Pages/LaneWidthonBusSafety.pdf> Accessed August 2, 2016

⁶¹ Transit in Small Cities; published by Transportation and Growth Management Program, 2013, page 38.

⁶² City of Woodburn. 2010. *Transit Plan Update*. Approved Final Report. Available at http://www.ci.woodburn.or.us/sites/default/files/TPU%20FINAL%20APPROVED%20REPORT_8NOV10%20-%20Copy.pdf. November 8.



examples illustrate the lack of options for individuals needing to make trips during weekends, or for anyone travelling outside of service hours on weekdays.⁶³

When asked to describe the greatest challenge (other than funding) facing their organizations in the delivery of transit services, most small county and rural providers responded that hiring sufficient qualified drivers, accessing driver training, and driver retention are significant concerns. In some areas, staffing shortages as a result of insufficient funds for driver salaries requires several rural transit entities to rely on volunteer labor. Gilliam County Transit (GCT) is notable because its nine vehicle fleet is operated by volunteer drivers⁶⁴, a value of about \$100,000 per year⁶⁵.

Some of these providers have even more limited resources. For instance, the Burns/Paiute Tribe has one bus route that runs from tribal land to the city of Burns. The route is served by a single high-mileage vehicle and no back-up vehicle is available. The tribe must then rely on Harney County to lend them a vehicle, which is a great example of collaboration between two rural agencies.

⁶³ The City of Woodburn *Transit Plan Update* (2010) reports that 60 percent of trips are shopping trips, while 40 percent are for medical purposes.

⁶⁴ See: <http://www.co.gilliam.or.us/transportation.html>

⁶⁵ Source: ODOT RPTD OPTIS



SECTION 4

Delivering Public Transportation Service

Public transportation services are offered by many public and private providers. The OPTP is focused on those services provided by public transportation agencies, public and private, large and small, across the state. However, planning, developing, funding, and implementing public transportation services are accomplished through coordination and cooperation among multiple agencies at many levels of government. Local providers, private sector businesses, regional governments, and state and federal governments all play important roles. The interactions of this complex system offer both challenges and opportunities. The federal government is influential in the development and provision of public transportation services through their critical role in funding, as well as shaping public transit services through policy and regulations. Local agencies, as the primary providers of public transportation in Oregon, are chiefly responsible for delivering the majority of service statewide. Local governments provide funds. The state is an important partner, distributing state and federal funds, providing technical assistance, and funding and contracting for services like POINT and Amtrak Cascades. The federal and state governments regulate intercity bus transportation; municipal governments regulate taxis and transportation network companies such as Uber.

The state's POINT intercity bus system is an example of the sometimes complex interaction between agencies to deliver public transportation services. POINT is funded through federal dollars and administered by the state. The bus routes themselves are contracted to private companies who then provide the service.

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Federal, state, regional, and local agencies are each responsible for determining policy and direction by which transit programs and services are developed and funded (Table 4-1). The federal government plays a crucial role in funding public transportation operations and capital improvements, as well as setting policy and regulations that help shape service. Many of the federal funds are allocated to the state for distribution to local agencies. FTA also distributes funds directly to some of the larger transit agencies and MPOs.

The state, primarily through ODOT's Rail and Public Transit Division (RPTD), manages the distribution of many of the federal funds to the local level and ensures state and federal policy is carried out. Larger transit providers receive federal funding directly from FTA. The state also provides state funding and develops policy and regulations. The state is directly responsible for public transportation services, for example, ODOTRPTD pays for Oregon's share of the Amtrak Cascades, with legislatively allocated funds, and contracts for intercity bus services to help link the public transportation system across the state. An FTA requirement obligates ODOT to seek engagement with other state agencies that also receive federal funds, such as Departments of Human Services and Veterans' Affairs, to coordinate transportation services and programs. ODOT



will soon be developing and implementing a new bus safety program. For more information about state and federal involvement in public transportation, see Appendix B.

Public transit agencies provide individuals with access to work, essential services, school, shopping, appointments, worship, and other services. They provide basic mobility for those who have limited transportation options because of age, income, or disability. The primary role of local transportation agencies is to operate and develop public transportation services tailored to the travel needs of their communities. In their day-to-day work, local providers operate and maintain services, plan for new capital projects, coordinate with governmental and human service partners, apply for grants, and address customer needs and issues. Increasingly, local transit agencies are tackling their mission from a “mobility management” perspective, as demonstrated by the more than 20 mobility management projects statewide.⁶⁶ Mobility management is a strategic approach to service planning that focuses on coordination of services and facilities and includes an emphasis on customer service.⁶⁷

Local providers coordinate with other local transportation entities to provide a range of options for individuals, coordinate with local government partners to ensure that adequate “first and last mile” facilities are available. Sidewalks and bike lanes, for example, are crucial pieces of the transportation system without which public transportation would be difficult or impossible to use. Mobility management strategies also attend to the discrete travel needs of individual customers, for example travel training and targeted travel planning.

4.2 Local Provider Organization

Providers of public transportation in Oregon are organized in several ways and by different statutory authorities. The organization and governance of public transportation organizations has important implications for an organization’s ability to levy taxes, collect local revenue, receive federal funding, and operate and administer public transportation. Table 4-2 shows common types of organizations, their powers and governance structure, and example agencies.

Table 4-2. Provider Organization

Public Transportation Entity	Powers And Organization	Example Agencies
Mass transit district (Oregon Revised Statute [ORS] 267)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be formed in any metropolitan statistical area as defined by the U.S. Census • May levy taxes, charge fares, levy vehicle registration fees, issue bonds, and borrow funds • Governed by a board of directors (Portland and 	TriMet, Lane Transit District, Salem Keizer Transit

⁶⁶ Source: ODOT RPTD

⁶⁷ APTA: <http://www.apta.com/resources/hottopics/mobility/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed May 31, 2016.



Table 4-2. Provider Organization

Public Transportation Entity	Powers And Organization	Example Agencies
	Eugene boards are appointed by the governor; Salem’s board is elected)	
Transportation districts (ORS 267)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be formed anywhere in Oregon, subject to vote • Can levy property taxes, charge fares, levy vehicle registration fees, and issue bonds • Governed by an elected seven member board 	RVTD, Hood River County Transportation District
County transit service districts (ORS 451)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May provide public transportation services by forming a service district • Can levy property taxes in the district to pay for services and may charge fares 	Yamhill County Transit Area, Lincoln County Transit Service District
Cities, counties, and other governments, such as councils of government (ORS 190)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May operate public transportation services • May use tax revenue for services and charge fares and can levy taxes (COGs are limited in ability to levy taxes) • County Commission or City Council typically governs services 	Wilsonville, Columbia County, Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, Mid-Columbia Council of Governments
Indian tribes (recognized by federal law)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance by Tribal Commission • Operate service with local, state or federal support • May operate across state lines and other jurisdictional boundaries and may charge fares 	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Klamath Tribes
Nonprofits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governed by volunteer board of directors • Rely on donations, earned revenues, grants or partnerships with government agencies to provide service and may charge fares 	Sweet Home Senior Center, Ride Connection

A provider’s organizational structure confers both responsibilities and potential issues and can include the following:

- **Ability to generate revenue**—Mass transit districts and transportation districts have statutory authority to raise different kinds of tax revenues and other fees to fund service. Nonprofits do not have taxing authority. City and county providers, without dedicated transit tax revenue,



must compete with other city and county services for limited tax revenues, particularly property taxes.

- **Grant funding**— Agencies that receive state and federal grant funds for operations or capital improvements must adhere to state and federal law, which may have implications for how the agency operates. Different grant and fund types are frequently inflexible, often targeted for specific services or must meet the particular grant requirement. Non-profits may have difficulties raising the required non-federal match.
- **Cooperation**—Transit and transportation districts can encompass multiple jurisdictions within a region. The districts may have different goals and objectives of the jurisdictions they serve, which require a high level of collaboration and cooperation between the agency and jurisdictions.

4.3 Funding Types and Availability

Funding is an essential for all providers; funds for operations and capital improvements come from a wide variety of sources. Table 4-3 shows some of the major funding sources available for public transportation in the state. For more detailed information on funding, see Appendix C.

Table 4-3. Major Sources of Public Transportation Funds in Oregon

Source	Funding
Federal government (USDOT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act, the federal transportation bill)—FAST Act establishes many programs, including discretionary and formula grants, that fund a wide variety of public transportation operations and capital improvements for urban and rural providers. FTA awards discretionary grants based on grant program objectives; formula grants are distributed based on a population formula. Major capital grant programs include New Starts and Small Starts programs.
State of Oregon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Transportation Fund—Fund is used to support public transportation services benefitting seniors and people with disabilities. • Mass Transit Payroll Assessment—Special payroll tax fund is distributed by Department of Administrative Services to public transportation districts that levy a tax and have state employees within their taxing district. • ConnectOregon—Grant program is legislatively allocated funds backed by lottery bonds intended to support non-highway modes of transportation, including transit capital projects through a competitive grant process. • Oregon Transportation Infrastructure Bank—Statewide revolving loan fund is designed to promote innovative financing solutions for transportation needs. • Direct funding from Oregon Legislature



Table 4-3. Major Sources of Public Transportation Funds in Oregon

Source	Funding
Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passenger fares, and other earned revenues —Revenue generated from operations of public transit typically covers between 5 to 25 percent of the operating cost of transit service. • Payroll taxes—Taxes are levied on employers based on a percentage of gross payroll (only available to certain providers). • Property taxes—Taxes on real property and available to many providers. • System Development charges/improvement fees Developer fees can support pedestrian and bicycle facilities that connect riders to their transit station or stop. Developers are sometimes required to construct these facilities as part of a project, also enhancing essential “first and last mile” connections • Other fees – local governments may also choose to develop local fees to support public transportation. For example, Corvallis charges a fee that is collected via utility bills and uses it to support fare-free transit in the city.

4.4 Funding Challenges

Stakeholder interviews and the OPTP provider survey reveal that stable, adequate funding is one of the top concerns of all providers.⁶⁸ Providers face many funding challenges, including funding stability as funding sources can be legislatively redirected or eliminated when government priorities change and the funds are vulnerable to changes in the economy. For example, local payroll tax revenues go up and down based on how the local or regional economy performs. Additionally, local property tax revenues in Oregon, relied on by many providers, are growth-limited due to several measures passed in the 1990s.

Competitive federal capital funding programs have been an important source of funds for some of the largest and most complex public transportation projects in the state. Federal funds have been under periodic threat due to declining federal gas tax receipts, political uncertainties, and potential priorities shifts as new transportation programs are authorized. However, in the newest federal authorizing legislation (FAST Act) the immediate outlook has improved. This is subject to change as the legislation is regularly reconsidered and there is continuing concern about the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. Adequate local “match” is needed to access federal funding and is an ongoing issue for some. Many federal sources require about 20 percent in matching funds, but this can vary from about 10 to about 50 percent match depending on the grant program funding requirements. Raising the local revenue needed to meet match requirements was identified as a concern by providers and fares cannot be used.

⁶⁸ Oregon Department of Transportation, 2015. Oregon Public Transportation Plan Provider Survey. October 2015.



The state has several important, although limited, funding sources for public transportation (Table 4-3). State funding generally provides a lesser share of most transit agencies' revenues as compared to federal funding. However, smaller agencies are dependent on state funds. Oregon lacks some of the funding sources available in other states for transportation. Two of the more common transit funding sources in other states, sales and fuel taxes, are not available in Oregon. Currently, Oregon has no sales tax, and the state constitution does not allow fuel taxes to be used for transit, which also precludes a local option fuel tax for transit funding. Previous efforts to revise the state constitution to allow gas tax revenue to be used for non-auto purposes (1980, 1990, 1991, and twice in 1992) have been unsuccessful.⁶⁹

At the state level, funds for public transportation funds have been fairly consistent. However, current state programs often fund fairly specific services, capital projects or benefit specific agencies. Some larger projects receive special funding by direct legislative allocation on a singular basis. The transportation grant program, *ConnectOregon* is open to all providers for capital and planning projects that are not eligible for the State Highway Fund. *ConnectOregon* funds are discretionary funds that require continuing legislative allocation.

Figure 4-1. 2014 Estimated Public Transportation Fund Sources

Source: Estimates calculated from internal ODOT expenditure information and Secretary of State Audits. ODOT Planning.

⁶⁹ Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA). 2015. *Please Support SJR 16 To Provide Wise Use of Oregon's Motor Vehicle Revenue*. Available at http://www.aortarail.org/images/uploads/SJR_16_for_Transportation_Choice.pdf. February.



Existing Conditions Report

Local communities often cannot respond to increasing demand for service due to the volatility of local funding sources. There are three primary sources of local funding for public transportation in Oregon: passenger fares, payroll taxes, and property taxes. It is difficult to increase revenues from existing resources or implement new ones. Some local governments can, at their discretion, use such revenues as general funds, transportation impact fees, system development charges, special assessments, and transportation utility fees. In local government budget processes, public transportation services compete for funds with many other infrastructure and service needs.

Despite these challenges, recognizing that many states do not have any state level programs for funding public transportation is important. Oregon is fortunate to have the Mass Transit Payroll Assessment, and the Special Transportation Fund as well as the ability to compete for special grant programs. However, Oregon public transportation services funding would benefit by having reliable, flexible, sustainable funding as the foundation for an integrated and interconnected system.

