

Wallowa, Union, and Baker Counties Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan

Fiscal Year 2019 Partial Update

Completed by Community Connection of Northeast Oregon, Inc.

(Prompted by Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund and House Bill 2017 requirements)

SYSTEM BARRIERS AND FINDINGS (in addition to 2016 findings)

- **Changed Low-Income Threshold.** The rules associated with House Bill 2017 and the accompanying Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund mandated that projects associated with that funding source be considered for their impact on *households* that make no more than 200% of the Federal Poverty Line. Projects not associated with this funding source are typically considered for their impact on *individuals* not exceeding 150% of the Federal Poverty Line.
- **Increased Reporting Requirements.** The rules associated with House Bill 2017 and the accompanying Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) calls for a significant amount of reporting for full transparency. This need dictates an increase in staff time for the Qualified Entities of Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties, and for Community Connection, which the STIF monies must support.
- **Student Transportation Support.** Prior to the introduction of STIF, there was no legislation requiring outreach and services be given any percentage of focus for riders in grades 9-12. Instead service provided to them were simply an additional benefit. Now a focus (and expenditures) of no less than 1% **must** be focused on this demographic.
- **Limited Regional Access.** Beyond the intercity routes traveling from Wallowa County, Baker County, and Umatilla County, it is difficult for Union County residents to travel out into the state of Oregon and beyond without access to Greyhound Bus Lines. This system is crucial to transportation access in the area, but has historically lacked financial backing by any for profit or governmental agencies in Union County.

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS (in addition to 2016 findings)

Need #	Need	Identified in Previous Plan?	Opportunity
Underserved Markets			
8	Students grades 9-12		Opportunities to lower cost, and/or expand services for these students exist in Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties
9	Passengers with Disabilities		Opportunities to enhance services and/or infrastructure, and/or service Passengers with Disabilities exist. The ADA, STIF, and ODOT's Public Transportation Plan further support these opportunities.
Operations			
18	Sustain Operations in the Future	✓	Reliable funding sources should be identified to sustain existing operations into the future. Additionally, more staff to cover increased operational hours will likely be needed with the programs introduced through STIF funding.
19	Enlarged Operation Facilities		Opportunity to expand existing facilities in Baker and Wallowa counties to accommodate increased support staff to facilitate growing services. Services include dispatch, call taking, ride scheduling, mobility management, marketing, and occasional driving.
Information and Marketing			
1	Service awareness and marketing	✓	Many are unaware of the services in the region, or do not realize the general public can utilize the services. Real-time information is unavailable.

STRATEGIES (in addition to 2016 findings)

No. 1 – Maintain Existing Service and Programs			
Strategy		Description	
Replace or acquire technology in a timely fashion		Keep up with the industry standard for passenger facing technology, as well as agency facing technology.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Well-maintained and up-to-date technology increase service reliability by reducing overhead costs and duplication of staff efforts.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify technology opportunities 2. Replace existing technology as needed 3. Research and implement industry technology enhancement (eg. Real-time GPS, onboard diagnostics) 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
Counties	Ongoing	Medium	\$\$\$
Priority: High			

No. 2 – Maintain Existing Service and Programs

Strategy		Description	
Replace vehicles in a timely fashion.		Keep up with capital costs by following ODOT's standards for vehicle replacement.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Well-maintained and up-to-date vehicles increase service reliability by reducing chance of breakdowns and provide for passenger comfort.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify capital replacement needs 2. Replace vehicles as needed 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit	Ongoing	Low	\$\$\$

Priority: High

No. 3– Maintain and expand Existing Service and Programs with Building Expansion

Strategy		Description	
Expand operation facilities		Accommodate increased office staff and drivers in Baker and Wallowa counties through building expansions	
Benefits		Action Items	
The new programs being delivered in these counties require more staff to come on board, and the expansions provide the space to make those jobs available.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand Baker County Facility 2. Expand Wallowa County Facility 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit	As soon as possible	Medium-High	\$\$\$

Priority: High

No.4 – Geographic

Strategy		Description	
Expand fixed-route service in high-need areas of La Grande.		Expand the La Grande fixed-route bus service to better serve residents living in high-need areas of the city based on demographics and housing patterns.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Stakeholders indicated that service in the southern part of La Grande is currently inadequate, and the area is home to a high concentration of low-income persons.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct community outreach to determine need 2. Identify potential routing/stop solutions 3. Identify funding 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit	Long (5+ years)	High	\$\$\$

Priority: Moderate-High

No.5 – Geographic

Strategy		Description	
Explore options for service to outlying/underserved communities.		Outlying communities in the region, such as Union, Cove, Haines, Sumpter, etc. have no access to transit services. Fixed-route services previously served Union but were poorly utilized, so other service models, such as employer-based vanpools or medical trip coordination, should be explored for serving these communities.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Access to transportation services for persons in these outlying areas is critical if they do not have access to a personal vehicle.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify geographic needs (e.g., Union) 2. Identify potential service solutions 3. Identify funding 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit, cities, counties, employers	Short (0-2)	High	\$\$\$\$

Priority: High

No.6 – Geographic

Strategy		Description	
Explore options for preserving access to Greyhound Bus Lines.		Access to regional, state, or national areas is extremely limited in these rural counties, and financial support to maintain this lifeline service is lacking in Union County.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Access to transportation services for persons in these outlying areas is critical if they do not have access to a personal vehicle.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify geographic needs (e.g., Union) 2. Identify potential service solutions 3. Identify funding 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit, cities, counties, employers	Medium (3-5 years)	High	\$\$\$\$

Priority: High

No. 7 – Temporal

Strategy		Description	
Expand weekend and evening service offerings.		Expand current transportation programs to offer an increased level of service during the evenings and/or on weekends. NEO Transit recently resumed Saturday operations, but EOU students and other community members would also like service offerings on weeknights. Highly funding level dependent.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Irregular shift work and other activities taking place on evenings or weekends cannot be served by transit in most cases. EOU students also rely on weekend and evening service, and would benefit from increased service options.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify peak demand periods for service 2. Identify funding source 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit	Long (5+ years)	High	\$\$\$\$

Priority: Low

No.8 –Organization			
Strategy		Description	
Explore options to better serve lower income households and riders		Utilize new funding stream to reduce or eliminate fares for lower income riders, students grades 9-12, and potentially all riders.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Greatly increased access to services, retail, and entertainment venues for all riders. Increased opportunity for community involvement and reduction of potential social isolation.		1. Assess the best approach in each county, and deliver fare adjustments accordingly.	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit	Short (0–2 years)	Medium	\$\$
Priority: High			
No.9 –Organization			
Strategy		Description	
Explore options to better serve riders with ADA protected needs.		Assess current level of access/support and adjust areas of opportunity such as bus stops with significant traveling distance from a curb cut.	
Benefits		Action Items	
Greatly increased access to services, retail, and entertainment venues for all riders. Increased opportunity for community involvement and reduction of potential social isolation.		1. Assess the best approach in each county, and deliver adjustments accordingly.	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
NEO Transit	Short (0–2 years)	Medium	\$\$
Priority: High			
No. 10– Organization			
Strategy		Description	
Create a Mobility Manager position		Create a Mobility Manager position that is able to assist with trip planning, travel training, grant writing, and transportation options among other services. This position could be shared between counties.	
Benefits		Action Items	
This strategy benefits organizations that need increased collaboration, marketing, and information. Travel training is a key strategy for increasing transit ridership that a Mobility Manager can coordinate.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Determine work plan and whether a valid option Identify funding source Advertise for position 	
Responsible Party	Timeframe	Level of Effort	Cost
Counties, NEO Transit	Medium (3-5 years)	Medium	\$\$\$
Priority: Medium			