

5 KEY FINDINGS AND TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This chapter summarizes some key findings from the analysis of existing conditions (Chapters 2 and 3) and community input (Chapter 4), and provides an assessment of the major public transportation needs for the Bend area.

KEY FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of demographics, land use, and existing transit service, key findings include:

- Transit’s relevance in Bend and the Central Oregon has increased dramatically in the past several years. Both the local fixed-route and regional Community Connector system are relatively new, including the fairly recent transition from the “BAT” to “CET” in Bend, and as such CET facilities and fleet are still evolving.
- Despite the impact of the economic downturn, Bend’s population grew by nearly 24,000 people between 2000 and 2010, an increase of about 45%. However, this level of growth is about 5% lower than earlier projections. Although there are a number of growing economic sectors, the housing downturn significantly affected employment (particularly construction-related jobs) and employment is not expected to recover to peak 2007 levels until 2020.
- Bend is a growing regional center for higher education, with significant recent growth in COCC and OSU enrollment. COCC is one of the most significant transit destinations in Bend for both local and regional service, and the planned OSU facility, with projected enrollment of 5,000 students within several years, is a key opportunity for transit.
- Regional commuters are also a key future opportunity for an integrated local-regional transit system. About 10,000 residents travel outside of Bend for work, while nearly 20,000 workers come into Bend for work. By comparison, about 16,000 people (over 60% of Bend’s working residents) both live and work in the city,

Draft Public Transit Plan
Bend MPO

- Although most residents (nearly 79%) drive alone to work as their primary commute mode, a majority of community survey respondents appears to be open to using transit if it was “convenient.”
- About 31% of residents live within a quarter-mile walking (network) distance of a bus stop and about 60% live within a half-mile network distance of a stop.
- The timed-transfer, hub-and-spoke system allows any destination in Bend that is served by transit to be reached with no more than one transfer. The majority of riders (over 60% of those making local trips in Bend) require a transfer to complete their trip. Since commute times and many trip distances in Bend are relatively short, the need to transfer on the current bus system imposes a significant penalty. While more than 75% of working residents have relatively short commutes of 20 minutes or less, more than half of workers who primarily ride transit have commutes of 30 minutes or more. In particular, the location of Hawthorne Station means that a transfer is necessary to access downtown from routes serving the eastern part of the city.
- The system currently serves primarily non-work trips. About a quarter of riders use transit to get to school, while about half of riders use it for purposes other than getting to work or school. Fewer than 1% of resident workers use public transportation as their *primary* commute mode to work.
- The utility of local transit in Bend is limited by its operating hours (until about 6:00 PM), which do not meet the needs of some workers, particularly those in service sector jobs, as well as college students. Later evening service is consistently identified as high priority need.
- Existing transit riders, which include a relatively high share of transit-dependent riders, are appreciative of transit service but recognize its limitations; only 40% of existing riders are “strongly” or “somewhat” satisfied with the system as it currently is.
- Existing service levels are not high enough to allow spontaneous use of transit. In particular, relatively low frequency and long travel times for some trips that require a transfer limit transit’s appeal for “choice” riders. For example,
- Transit ridership and productivity (number of riders per vehicle hour) have increased over the past three years and the existing structure of the fixed-route system has been able to accommodate the ridership growth. However, high ridership and/or transit delays due to congestion have emerged as issues on some transit routes and corridors.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1991 requires transit operators to provide complementary paratransit service within a 3/4 mile distance of fixed-route bus service. Bend Dial-A-Ride operates within Bend city limits and provides geographic coverage and days/hours of availability that exceed ADA requirements for complementary paratransit service.
- Disincentives to auto use (e.g., delay, congestion, parking supply, etc.) are currently not significant in Bend. However, congestion is predicted to increase by 2030 and the opportunity to address congestion through traditional means is limited. Factors such as the cost of gas are potential, but uncertain, incentives to use non-auto travel modes.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Public transportation needs were identified from the above analysis and input. The project TAC also provided important input into the assessment of overall priority. Figure 5-1 identifies the prioritized major transit needs, among which later evening service is a shared top priority among both existing riders and more infrequent or non-riders. Existing riders top priorities include additional weekend service followed by increased weekday frequency of service. More infrequent riders or non-riders top priorities include coverage to areas without existing coverage as well as more frequent and more direct service.

Numerous more nuanced needs were identified. The most significant operational issue among these is:

- Difficulty with on-time performance and maintaining a 40-minute running time on Route 5 (Wells Acres), resulting in this route being off of the coordinated pulse departure time⁷ for several hours each day) and overcrowding.

Other issues/needs include:

- Route 11 (Galveston), e.g., longer service hours, consistent headway, Saturday service.
- Better information, clarity, e.g., “Hard to plan around 40-minute schedules.”
- Improved regional connections, e.g., Redmond Airport (direct), no reservations, etc.

⁷ All Bend local fixed bus routes generally leave Hawthorne Station at the same time every 40 minutes (e.g., 6:40 am, 7:20 am, 8:00 am, etc.) to allow passengers to make connections between routes.

Draft Public Transit Plan
Bend MPO

- Additional service coverage, including in NE Bend, SE Bend, and Deschutes River Woods, and Park & Ride access.

Figure 5-1 Major Public Transportation Needs

Expressed Major Service Needs	Overall Assessment	Assessment of Relative Priority as Identified by:		
		Current Riders	General Public	TAC
Early Evening Service Hours (6:00 – 8:00 PM)	High	High	High	High
Increase Saturday Frequency	High	High	Low	High
Provide Sunday Service	High	High	Low	High
Increase Weekday Frequency	High	Medium-High	High	High
Later Evening Service Hours (8:00 – 10:00 PM)	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Expand Saturday Hours	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Early Morning Service Hours (Start at 5:00 AM)	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Provide Faster, More Direct Service	Low-Medium	Low	Medium	No Clear Consensus
Expand Service Coverage	Low-Medium	Low	High	Address other needs first

6 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This chapter provides a set of goals and objectives specific to the provision of transit service in Bend. A logical starting point for updating/developing transit-specific goals and objectives is the City of Bend’s Transportation System Plan (TSP) and the Bend MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

EXISTING TRANSIT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following strategies for public transit in the TSP, which are also included in the MTP, lay out the vision for transit within city and MPO boundaries. They are excerpted below:

- **6.4.2 MULTI-MODAL STRATEGIES:** Public transportation is an important element of multi-modal transportation planning. It provides a valuable transportation alternative for high volume travel corridors....
- **6.4.3 COMMUNITY MOBILITY:** Public transportation improves mobility for a wide range of the traveling public.... Thus, public transportation is a valuable service that fills a much broader function than solely trip reduction. It provides mobility for those without cars as well as being an alternative to the automobile for many travel needs of the community.

This language in the MTP and TSP makes it clear that public transportation is a key element of multimodal transportation planning as a matter of MPO and City policy and identifies various benefits derived from transit. It also states that, beyond reducing vehicle trips, transit provides a valuable service to a diversity of users—people who depend on transit for mobility as well as people who choose to use it.

The City of Bend’s Transportation System Plan expresses the vision for transit through four objectives, six supporting policies, and seven implementation actions.

RECOMMENDED TRANSIT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the input received through this process, the TSP provides a solid foundation for the development of goals and objectives presented in the Public

Transit Plan. However, the PTP presents the objectives, policies and implementation actions in a different manner so that progress towards each goal can be monitored more directly. As such, the TSP objectives are presented in the PTP as “Goals” and the TSP policies are presented as “Objectives” in the PTP. Modifications to existing language (as noted) and new objectives are presented under each goal, with additions shown in italics; deletions are not indicated.

Goal 1: Provide public transportation services for the transportation disadvantaged

Objectives

- A. Preserve and improve the existing Dial-A-Ride service. (Modified TSP Policy #1).
- B. *Equitably provide transit services throughout the city, including to areas with high concentrations of low-income households, households without a vehicle, seniors, and people with disabilities.*
- C. *Provide transit service to all middle and high schools, as well as higher education facilities.*

Goal 2: Reduce reliance on automobiles and develop public transportation facilities

Objectives

- A. *Support and promote expansion of a reliable public transportation system that makes transit an attractive travel choice for Bend residents and visitors in order to reduce reliance on the automobile. Over time, the best transit service in Bend (highest frequency, most reliable, longest service span, etc.) should be provided in “primary transit corridors,” as presented in the Public Transit Plan.* (Modified TSP Policy #2)
- B. Work with other governmental agencies to support implementation of a 20-year-*Public Transit Plan*. Ordinances shall be adopted that implement the Public Transit Plan. (Modified TSP Policy #6).

Goal 3: Increase mobility, accessibility, and visibility of transit throughout the urban area

Objectives

- A. Work with COIC, Central Oregon communities, and the State to *maintain or improve connections between local Bend transit services and inter-urban public transportation services*. Priority shall be given to *high-ridership corridors and connections*. (Modified TSP Policy #4)

- B. Coordinate with *the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC)*, the State, and other jurisdictions to evaluate funding alternatives and seek appropriate resources to *preserve and support future expansion of the* public transportation system. Effort should be made to evaluate creative funding techniques that may include the combination of public and private transportation resources in coordination with other agencies and transportation providers. (Modified TSP Policy #3)
- C. *Continue to partner with local organizations, businesses and agencies to enhance the image of transit throughout the community.*

Goal 4: Provide infrastructure and land use planning to support transit

Objectives

- A. Implement land use ordinances and other regulations that establish pedestrian and transit-friendly design along potential or existing transit routes, to improve access to the fixed-route transit system. (Modified TSP Policy #5)
- B. *Encourage new development requiring transit service, such as schools, hospitals, clinics, high-density housing, etc., to locate along an existing transit route. Encourage the highest-intensity uses to locate along primary transit corridors, which would offer the highest level of transit service.*
- C. Support implementation and/or improvement of *secondary transit hubs* including the Central Oregon Community College, the St. Charles Medical Center, and sites on the north and south reaches of Bend, *including land acquisition and other infrastructure.* (Modified Implementation Action #d)
- D. Acquire properties (or secure joint use agreements) for Park-n-Ride lots at strategically located sites *throughout the urban area. These locations may be co-located with secondary transit hubs or other major stops* (see also Objective 4C).

The Complete Transit System Concept

A Complete Transit System is a unifying concept for complementary transit **service quality and land use elements** (e.g., service levels and land use policies) and **non-service elements** (e.g., facilities, pedestrian and bicycle access, etc.) that function together to achieve the desired local outcomes for transit in Bend. A Complete Transit System is the foundation for improving the quality of transit service and facilities in Bend, making transit an attractive travel option for “choice” riders and better meeting the access and service needs of “transit dependent” riders.

The Public Transit Plan provides strategies and recommendations for Bend to develop a Complete Transit System. These concepts support the goals outlined in this chapter, and are described in further detail in the following chapters (Chapter 7 – Service Quality and Land Use and Chapter 8 – Non-Service Elements).

Service Quality and Land Use

This element relates transit service to characteristics of transit-supportive land use and urban form. It describes the concept of primary transit corridors—a network of streets where transit service levels are aligned with the desire and capacity to increase land use intensity, and utility capacity is sufficient to support that level of intensity.

- Service design, service types, and vehicles
- Policies and investments related to management of street right-of-way (e.g., that provide priority to transit vehicles)
- Coordination of local and regional service

Non-Service Elements – Facilities and Amenities

Facilities and amenities include types of transit facilities, passenger amenities at those facilities, and thresholds (e.g., number of boardings) for prioritizing these capital investments. This element addresses:

- Transit centers, secondary transit hubs, and park & ride facilities
- Stops and shelters

Non-Service Elements - Access

Access strategies identify multimodal access strategies to increase the number of residents within a convenient distance to transit (typically considered to be about a quarter-mile for bus service), including:

- Pedestrian Access: Sidewalks, curb ramps, street crossings
- Bicycle Access: Bicycle facilities, parking, and end-of-trip facilities

Non-Service Elements – Demand Management

This element addresses:

- Partnership opportunities between local and regional public transit providers and businesses, institutions, and other organizations that influence or use public transit service
- Programs and policies to promote the use of public transit among Bend residents and employees

Non-Service Elements – Marketing/Branding

This element identifies strategies and programs to improve the overall perception of transit as an attractive travel option and help foster a “culture” of transit use in Bend.