



Umatilla County Transit Development Plan

April 2023 Draft

Introduction

Umatilla County transit providers have operated demand-response services for seniors and people with disabilities as far back as the 1960's, with these services expanding through to the 1990's. Demand for transit services expanded countywide, with further interest in fixed-route and other transportation options for the general population, increased access for meal delivery and medical trips, and regional travel options. The early 2000's saw the advent of the first fixed-route service, with regional services entering the mix in the later 2000's. The 2010's brought along expanded services, especially as Oregon Legislature passed Keep Oregon Moving (HB 2017), which created a new source of funds for transit projects via employee payroll taxes, among other funding sources. Today, local fixed-route and demand-response services are available in the Hermiston, Milton-Freewater, Mission, and Pendleton areas, with regional services connecting Umatilla cities and beyond to Morrow, Walla Walla, Union, and Grant counties.

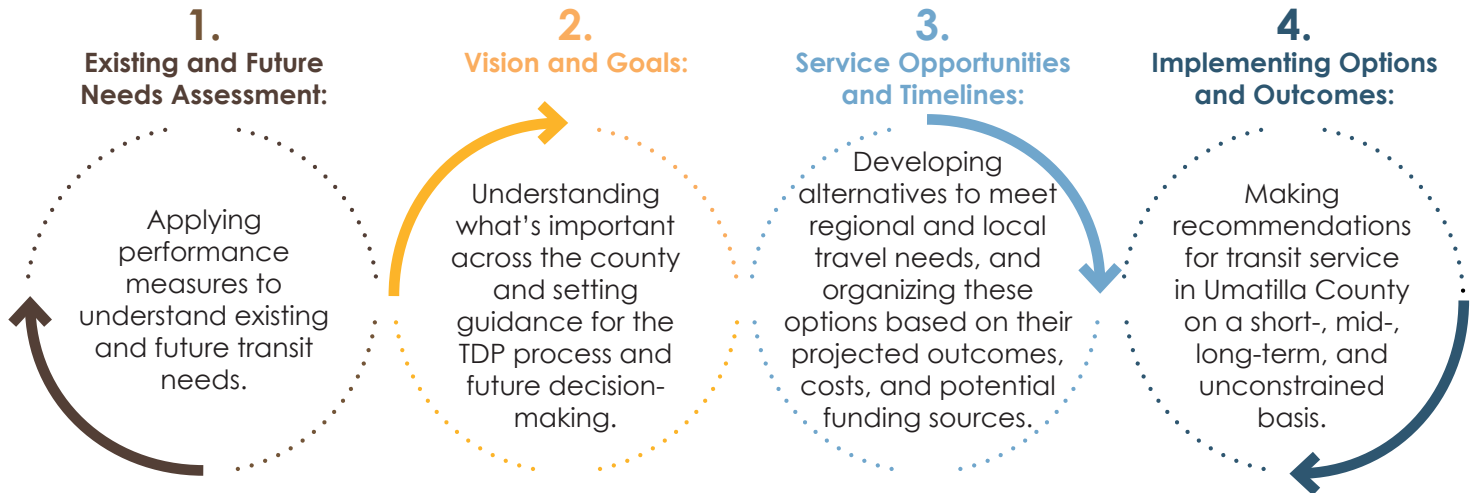
With the advent of HB 2017, the County's responsibilities have expanded, and projects must be identified within a plan to be eligible for HB 2017's Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF). As the Qualified Entity (QE), Umatilla County must coordinate distribution of these funds to transit providers. These funds supported new and existing efforts, such as:

- Support for existing services, such as the City of Hermiston Senior and Disabled Taxi Program, City of Milton-Freewater fixed-route and taxi services, City of Pendleton Let'er Bus and taxi services, and intercity routes.
- In 2019, establishment of the Hermiston WORC program, which aims to serve low-income employees within western Umatilla County. Since the funding for the program came from a statewide payroll tax, the purpose of this program was to allow people employed within the zip codes of western Umatilla County to get to and from work.
- Capital improvements, such as bus stop amenities and a new bus barn in northwest Pendleton.
- Discretionary grants for intercity routes, including expansion of existing services and establishment of new intercity routes, such as the Hermiston-Boardman Connector.

Projects funded by STIF must be tracked and reported by each involved entity, leading to redundancies across agencies. To continue their success in providing a range of transportation options for a range of needs, Umatilla County and the transit providers will need to not only continue collaborating and enhancing their partnering abilities, but also consider new means of administering transit services. Of particular need for the County is an evaluation of governance options that resolve jurisdictional barriers and reporting redundancies and bolster economies of scale while maintaining local decision-making autonomy.

PROJECT PROCESS

The Umatilla County TDP came together in four broad steps:



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The project process included several touchpoints where stakeholders and the public could provide input.



Project Webpage: provides information about the project, schedule, and technical memoranda



Stakeholder Outreach Events: includes discussions with key stakeholders in the project area to better understand the needs of the public



Online/On-board Survey: used to determine how and where people use transit services, gather thoughts about proposed modifications to existing and proposed transit routes, and gain and understanding of the public's transportation priorities and preferences



Advisory Committee: reviews and provides feedback on technical memoranda and the draft TDP and represents ODOT, local cities, and community members



Board of Commissioners and Umatilla County Transportation Advisory Committee (UCTAC): reviews and provides recommendations before adopting the final TDP

Existing Services

This section discusses baseline conditions of the transit system as reviewed in Memo #1: Existing and Future Transit Needs. **Figure 2** shows the fixed-route services and Table 1 summarizes dial-a-ride service options in and near Umatilla County.

Figure 1. Ridership in Umatilla County

Transit ridership continues to recover in Umatilla County. Local transportation options serve many day-to-day needs, while regional services provide critical connections across and beyond the county.

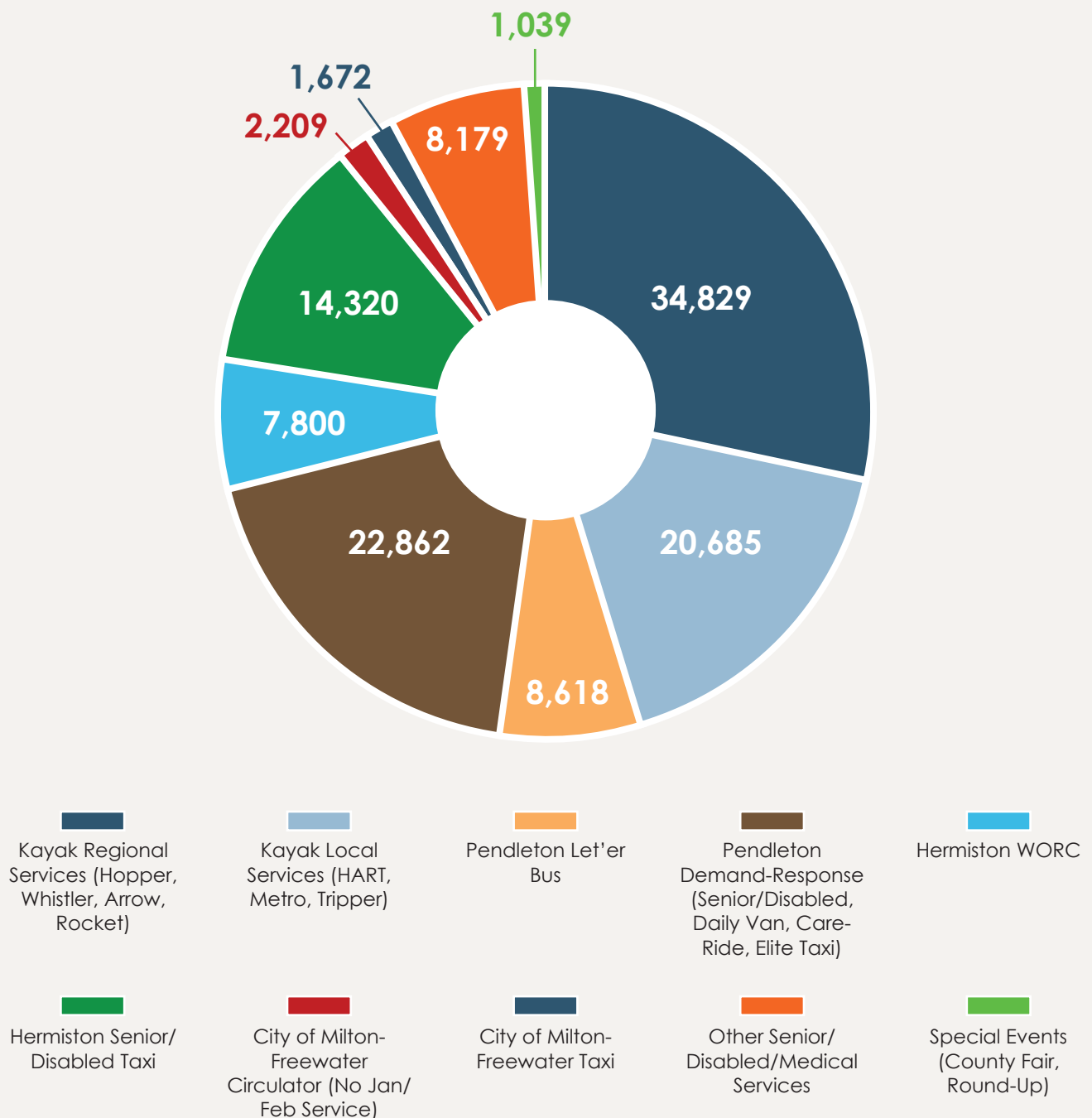
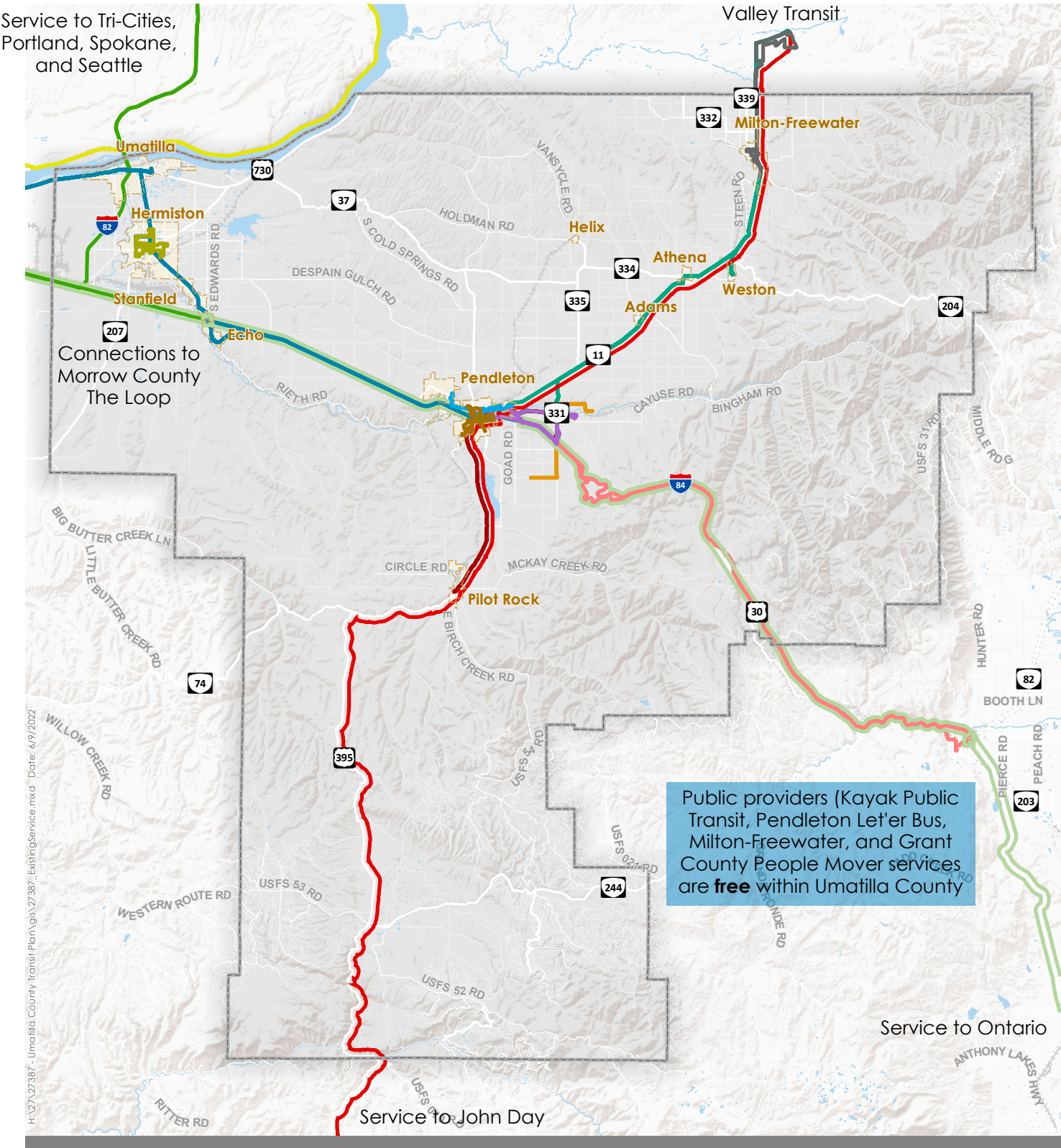


Figure 2. Existing Services in Umatilla County



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|----------------------------|--|
| CTUIR Hermiston Hart | Pendleton Let'er Bus North East Route |
| CTUIR Hermiston Hopper | Pendleton Let'er Bus South West Route |
| CTUIR La Grande Arrow | Milton-Freewater / Walla Walla |
| CTUIR Mission Metro | People Mover Prairie City to Walla Walla |
| CTUIR Pilot Rocket | Amtrak Empire Builder |
| CTUIR Tutuilla Tripper | Amtrak Salt Lake City - Boise - Portland |
| CTUIR Walla Walla Whistler | Amtrak Spokane - Portland |



Table 1. Dial-a-Ride Transportation Service Options within Umatilla County

TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER	SERVICE TYPE	OPERATING HOURS	SERVICE AREA
CTUIR – Kayak Public Transit	ADA Paratransit	Weekdays from 7:30am – 4pm	Mission
City of Pendleton Senior/Disabled Services and Daily Van	Dial-A-Ride (Taxi Voucher for seniors/people with disabilities; general public as space allows)	Every day: 7am – 7pm minimum, potential earlier/ morning/late evening services (except for holidays)	Pendleton, within Urban Growth Boundary, and within seven driving miles of Pendleton
City of Pendleton Parks and Rec	Summer Service (Geared toward children, open to public)	Summer (prearranged recreation schedule)	Pendleton Community Parks
Pendleton Care-Ride	Dial-a-Ride (Non-Emergency Medical Transportation)	N/A	Pendleton
City of Milton-Freewater	Dial-a-Ride (Paratransit taxi)	Monday through Saturday, 7am – 4pm	5-mile radius of Milton-Freewater City Center
City of Hermiston Taxi Programs	Employment Dial-a-Ride	Operates when taxi provider is operating: 18 hours a day for seven days a week (unless otherwise stated by the taxi provider)	Hermiston, western Umatilla County
	Senior & Disabled Dial-a-Ride		Hermiston City Limits
Morrow County The Loop	Dial-A-Ride	Weekdays from 8am – 12pm and 1pm – 5pm	Heppner, Boardman, Irrigon, Lone, Lexington
Valley Transit/ Valley Transit Plus	Job Access	Job Access (reservation-based): Daily from 5:00am – 11:30pm	Walla Walla, College Place, and fringes of Garrett and Walla Walla East
Clearview Mediation and Disability Resource	Medicaid Rides	Weekdays from 7am – 6pm;	Primarily trips originating in Umatilla and Morrow Counties, Morrow County limited to Boardman, Irrigon, sometimes Heppner.
Good Shephard Health Care System CareVan	Weekends and nights by appointment	Weekends and nights by appointment	Hermiston, Echo, Stanfield, Umatilla, Irrigon, Boardman
Hermiston Senior Center	Dial-A-Ride		Hermiston

Vision and Goals

This section highlights the transit vision and goals that informed the TDP process and will continue to provide guidance as Umatilla County implements this plan. On a state and local level, they focus on equity, health and safety, sustainability, mobility and convenience, and coordination. The vision is as follows:

Provide an equitable, safe, convenient, and coordinated transit network throughout Umatilla County that will support the health and well-being of individuals, communities, the economy, and the environment.

The goals are presented below.



GOAL 1.

EQUITY

Build a transit system that meets the needs of users of all backgrounds, including a range of age, ability, income, and more.



GOAL 2.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Foster public health by increasing use of active travel and improving safe access to the outdoors, health care, healthy food, and similar healthy places.



GOAL 3.

MOBILITY, CONNECTIVITY, AND CONVENIENCE

Improve service coverage throughout the County, increase frequency and hours of service, and provide connections within and beyond the county to access the places riders need to go.



GOAL 4.

SUSTAINABILITY

Foster environmental, economic, and fiscal sustainability through transit investments.



GOAL 5.

COORDINATION

Collaborate with public and private partners to maximize services.



GOAL 6.

INFORMATION, MARKETING, AND TECHNOLOGY

Improve awareness of and ease of access to transit facilities.

Prioritization and Projects

Future routing service opportunities were prioritized by timeframe based on their evaluation results, funding availability, public and stakeholder feedback, and other factors influencing decision-making, including other services and capital purchases. Most notably, transit services in Umatilla County will be financially constrained unless additional funding or reduced operating costs are achieved. **Table 2** shows the preliminary prioritization recommendations by timeframe.

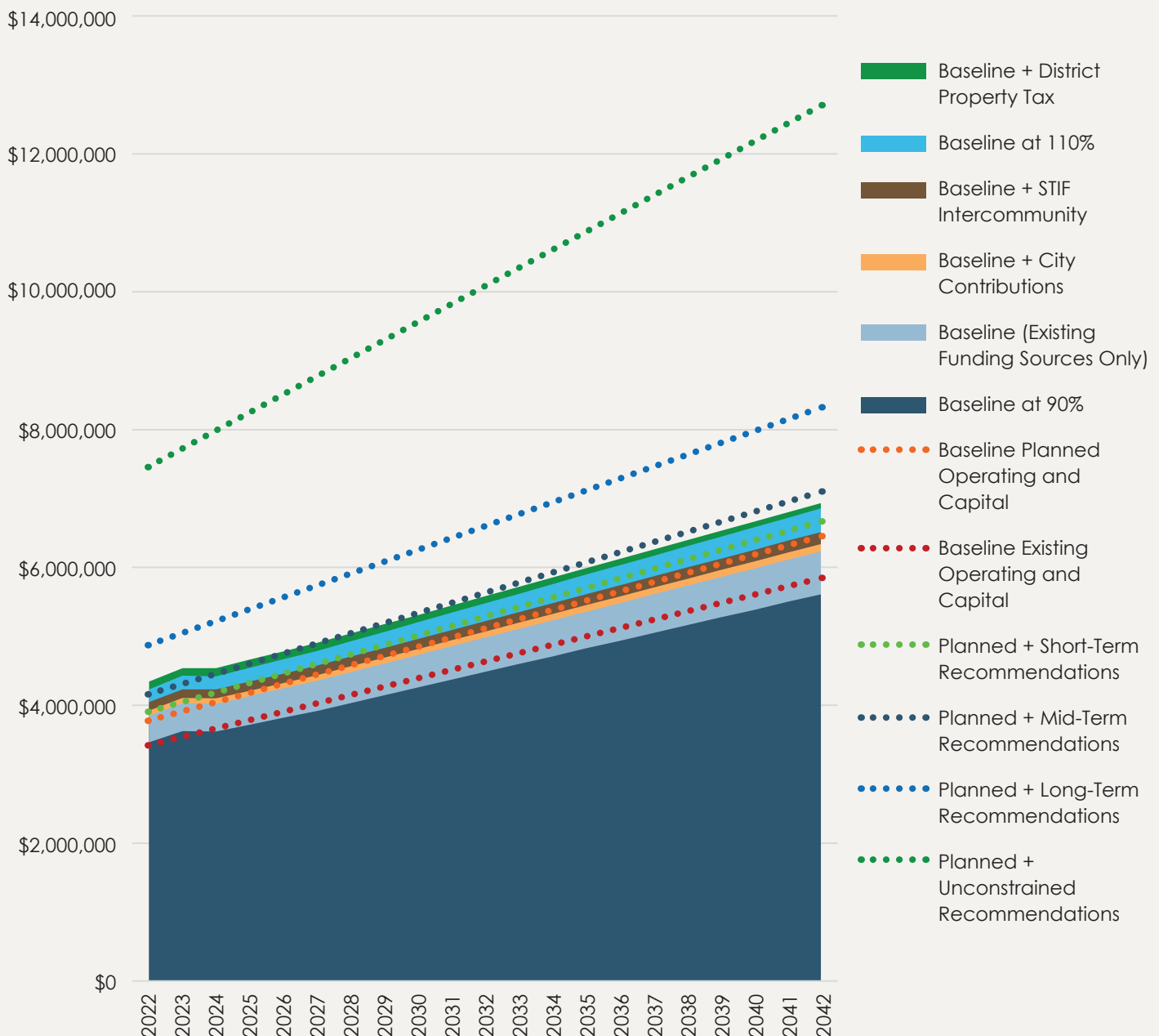
Table 2. Service Opportunity Prioritization

IMPROVEMENT	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	UNCONSTRAINED
Routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Hermiston – Boardman Connector and Boardman – Port of Morrow Circular (included in planned baseline costs/vehicles) Implement Tri-Cities route Adjust stops for Milton-Freewater route and connecting stop for regional services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add one weekday trip for Hermiston HART, La Grande Arrow, and Pilot Rocket Implement Mission Metro Alternative A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase weekend service on all fixed-routes and demand-response services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase frequency for weekday and weekend service on all fixed-routes and demand-response services
Information, Technology, & Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Real-time vehicle arrival information and passenger counters Rider tools and information via website and mobile app Bus stop improvements, in particular for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pendleton Walmart Hermiston Walmart Til Taylor Park Hermiston transit center Nixyaawi Governance Center/ Tribal Health Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop centralized Pendleton transit center Pursue low/ no-emission vehicles and infrastructure Continue bus stop improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue bus stop improvements 	
Additional Operating Costs	+\$127,500	+\$255,000 (\$383,000 total)	+\$718,000 (\$1,101,000 total)	+\$2.6M (\$3.7M total)
Total New Buses	+2 buses (Tri-Cities Route)	+2 buses (increased frequency)	0 net new (use same fleet as weekday service)	+10 buses (doubled frequency)

Funding

There are several federal, state, and local funding sources that can be utilized for funding transit service improvements in Umatilla County. Many state and federal funding sources require a 10-20% local match to receive funding. Therefore, small increases in local funding can be leveraged to make substantial increases in state and federal funding. The importance of different funding sources should be noted, as they focus on different priorities, making specific services eligible. With growing cities, different funding sources should be pursued to accommodate growth. **Figure 3** shows the project packages compared to the projected funding scenarios. As noted previously, increased funding would be needed to make the short-term, mid-term, and long-term project packages considered constrained. Further, costs for operating service have historically outpaced federal and state funding growth rates, and providers will need to invest in innovative solutions to stabilize costs.

Figure 3. Projected Funding Scenarios and Project Packages



Implementation Plan

The implementation plan includes a discussion on the following topics: (1) capital and infrastructure plan, (2) staffing considerations, (3) management, marketing and information plan, (4) governance and agency coordination, (5) system performance monitoring, and (6) transit-supportive land use codes and policies to successfully prepare for, implement, and track performance of the recommendations. This section provides an overview of the implementation steps.

CAPITAL PLAN

The capital and infrastructure plan provides a programmatic approach to support transit operations in Umatilla County with rider amenities and infrastructure that provide for the safe use and enjoyment of the transit system. It includes the following:

- **Bus stop Improvements.** Bus stop improvements increase rider comfort while waiting to board. Amenities can include stop signage, bus shelters, benches, timetables, trash cans, bike racks, and more.
- **Vehicle Fleet.** A well-maintained and right-sized fleet allows services to operate reliably and accommodate rider demand.
- **Maintenance and Storage.** Locating maintenance and storage facilities strategically and planning for adequate space decreases “deadheading” of the fleet and helps to quickly access maintenance services.
- **Technology.** Technologies facilitate a more efficient and convenient user experience and have the potential to better serve riders in the future.

A sampling of the capital plan is shown in Figure 4, providing guidance on bus stop locations and amenities.

STAFFING

Additional transit service requires additional staff. This includes driver staff, supervisors, maintenance staff, administration staff, and other staff that would be needed as (regular or specialized) service increases. Driver skills should be considered, including whether a driver needs a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) for the larger regional vehicles, compared to a regular driver's license for demand-response services. The need for staff in-house versus contracted (like the taxi programs) should also be considered. Additional considerations include:

- **Collaborating** with workplace training organizations to attract and train new staff.
- **Conducting** staff feedback sessions to understand staff perspectives, including challenging components of operating a route or serving a stop, feedback passed on from riders, and other potential issues. Collecting this feedback can help to boost operations and improve the work environment for staff.
- **Assessing** staff compensation and benefit packages to promote livable wages.
- **Monitoring** staffing needs based on changes to governance and agency coordination, as discussed previously.

Figure 4.

DESIGNING BUS STOPS



Safe and comfortable facilities can improve the experience of riding transit and increase ridership by improving stop visibility, providing protection from poor weather, and improving access to transit. The following table shows typical stop amenities, describes their typical costs, and provides the activity levels that typically prompt inclusion of them. Scenarios that may trigger higher levels of amenities include:

- **Land use** – assisted living homes, medical facilities, veteran's resources, and other land uses may increase the need for benches or shelters at stops; low-density areas may see higher bike rack/locker demands due to the longer distance to travel to stops
- **Customer use** – amenities such as trash cans or information cases may be triggered by trash accumulating at stops, bus drivers receiving information requests from riders, or riders directly requesting these improvements
- **Coordination opportunities** – if a local jurisdiction is looking to provide lighting, repaving, etc. on a transit route, installing higher-level bus amenities may be advantageous to reduce cost even if a stop hasn't reached higher activity levels yet

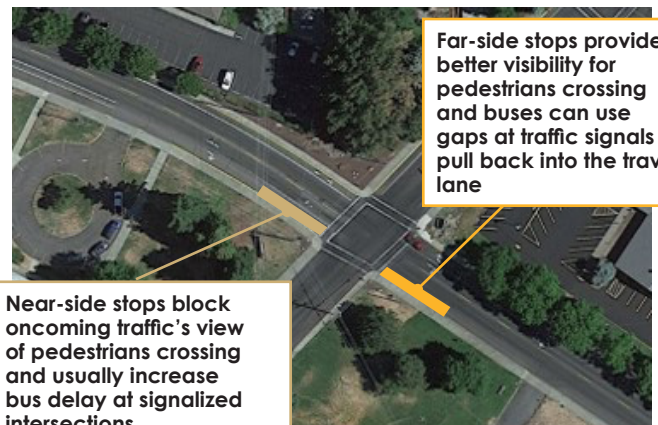
AMENITY	TYPICAL COST	STOP LEVEL
Signage & route information	\$300 to \$1,000	All stops
Lighting	\$5,000 to \$10,000	All stops
Bench	\$500 to \$1,500	3+ boardings per day
Shelter (small)	\$6,000	20+ boardings per day
Trash can	\$1,000 to \$1,500	Major bus stops/transit centers, as-needed
Bike racks	\$150 to \$300 (two-bike rack)	Major bus stops/transit centers, near bike routes
Information cases (systemwide route information; advertising)	\$1,000 to \$10,000	Major bus stops/transit centers
Bike lockers	\$2,000 to \$3,000 per locker	Major bus stops/transit centers, near bike routes
Shelter/covered area (large)	Varies	Major bus stops/transit centers

PLACEMENT AND PULLOUTS:

Transit stops should be coordinated with roadway agencies to ensure stops are ADA-accessible and connect to low-stress walking and biking facilities and crossings. This coordination should include maintenance considerations, such as emptying trash cans and snowplow operations.

On major roadways with speeds of 35 mph or more, such as state highways, transit agencies may consider bus stops that allow buses to stop out of the traffic lane, to avoid rear-end collisions and discourage unsafe passing of the bus by motorists.

NEAR-SIDE VS. FAR-SIDE?



Near-side stops block oncoming traffic's view of pedestrians crossing and usually increase bus delay at signalized intersections

Far-side stops provide better visibility for pedestrians crossing and buses can use gaps at traffic signals to pull back into the travel lane

MANAGEMENT, MARKETING, AND INFORMATION

Management, marketing, and information planning would help publicize and encourage people to use transit.

- **Management Strategies.** Behind-the-scenes processes for effective staff operations and improved rider experience. Collaboration and coordination with employers, medical-related service organizations, tribal agencies, etc. lead to a comprehensive and efficient transit system for inter-and intra-regional travel.
- **Marketing and Information Strategy.** Actions related to marketing and information can be implemented in the short-term and maintained on a long-term basis. User-friendly brochures, real-time trip-planning technologies, transit education, and advertising are ways to improve customer service, retain existing and attract new riders, and create immediate recognition.

GOVERNANCE

Different governance scenarios present a range of coordination opportunities, staff commitments, costs (both increased and decreased depending on alternative), and benefits. The level of governance varies depending on the following concepts: communication, coordination, collaboration, and consolidation.

- **Communication.** Partners act independently while exchanging information.
- **Coordination.** Partners act jointly on an informal basis (by non-binding action).
- **Collaboration.** Partners act jointly on a formal basis (by binding action).
- **Consolidation.** Partners integrate a more regionalized decision-making framework.

As the interaction between partners becomes less individually focused, the overall decision-making process becomes more structured, where resources must be devoted to. Additionally, there are principal considerations that shape different governing scenarios. These considerations include the following:

- **Elected Oversight and Policymaking:** transparent communication on any public issue and consistent contracting standards and requirements,
- **Operational Efficiency:** factors, including day-to-day routes, fleet management, staff training, etc., that can improve regional operations,
- **Funding:** the ability to preserve access to existing revenue streams and outline opportunities for additional funding,
- **Service Delivery:** the ability to provide multiple service models, such as continued operations by existing service providers, and
- **Fixed-Route Focus:** an initial focus on fixed-route service with the potential to expand service models. Many demand-response services are locally-based and contracted to taxi companies, and could continue to be operated as such regardless of governance scenario.

The plan describes several governance scenarios, as well as their trade-offs and considerations for further exploring and/or pursuing them.

SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

System performance monitoring helps regularly track and evaluate service outcomes against set benchmarks, allowing implementable service adjustments. Two types of performance measures (annual and less-frequent) are considered and may be adjusted based on the monitored performance.

- **Annual Review of Performance Measures** are used to understand how new services are being used. Factors that are reviewed include capital costs, operating costs, revenue services hours, rides per hour, etc. These measures are typically already monitored for National Transit Database (NTD) reporting purposes.
 - Capital costs
 - Operating costs
 - Annual rides
 - Revenue service hours
 - Rides per hour
 - Cost per hour
 - Number of dial-a-ride/deviation request denials (demand-response and services that deviate)
- **Less-Frequent Review of Performance Measures** are either (1) less likely to change in a significant way on an annual basis and do not need to be tracked each year, or (2) are time-intensive to evaluate on an annual basis.
 - System ease of use
 - Bicycle and pedestrian access

LAND USE AND POLICY

Land uses, development density, transportation system connectivity and access, parking requirements, and urban form (e.g., building setbacks) are all regulatory elements and code strategies related to development that affect how supportive an area is for transit service. Example transit-supportive code strategies were identified for:

- **Coordination** – Coordination between jurisdictions and transit service providers regarding proposed development is critical to ensuring transit-supportive development occurs.
- **Uses** – The general idea behind use-related transit-supportive strategies is: (a) to encourage uses that support a high number and density of potential transit riders; and (b) to discourage uses that do not provide many riders or that do not promote a pedestrian-oriented environment that supports safe, convenient, and attractive transit access.
- **Development Standards** – Development standards address the intensity and form that development takes. Like use regulations, development standards can be used to promote higher densities of riders near transit, establish a pedestrian-friendly environment, and support transit.
- **Access** – Providing safe and convenient access to transit is critical to its robust use. In addition to requiring access directly from buildings on a site to an existing or planned transit stop, transit-supportive access ensures that transportation network connectivity is high enough to easily reach transit stops by walking and rolling (e.g., biking, scooting, mobility devices).
- **Parking** – Parking affects the transit orientation of development in several ways. Capping the amount of vehicle parking permitted can help make alternatives to driving more attractive. Providing sufficient and well-designed bicycle parking supports bike connections from transit to destinations. The location and design of parking lots – e.g., restricting parking between buildings and the street, and requiring landscaping and walkways – play a significant role in making pedestrian access to transit attractive and convenient. Parking areas also provide potential locations for transit stops, park-and-rides, and ridesharing.

Looking Forward

Transit plays an important role in Umatilla County, connecting its residents and visitors to the places they need and want to go. The recommendations shown here include conceptual guidance to be refined by Umatilla County and its partners moving forward. With this plan, Umatilla County seeks to enhance transit service to meet the needs of the community, improve the transit experience, and prepare for future regional growth and travel.

