



**Tuesday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**Hood River County Transportation District**  
**STIF Advisory Committee Meeting**

**224 Wasco Loop, Board Conference Room**  
**Hood River, OR 97031**  
**4:00pm – 5:00pm**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Call Meeting to Order:**

Amy called the Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds (STIF) Advisory Committee to order at 4:04 p.m.

**2. Roll Call:**

Committee members Gisela Ayala-Echeverria (One Community Health), Kate Harrison (Providence Dethman House), Kevin Liburdy (City of Hood River Planning Department), Sara Crook (Travel Trainer for CAT & MCEDD), Eleazar Reyes (One Community Health) and Lexi Stickel (PacificSource) were in attendance.

**Staff:** Amy Schlappi

**3. Committee Responsibility**

Amy presented a slide show to review responsibilities of STIF advisory committee members, highlight achievements of the last year and ideas for the upcoming STIF plan. The goal of this meeting is to help CAT staff understand the needs for low-income, seniors, individuals with disabilities but also the general public.

1. Staff recommended change to STIF Committee Bylaws: Current committee requirement is 5-7 advisory members but CAT will ask the Board to approve a change to only require at least 3 members.

**4. 2023-2024 End of Year Report Highlights**

Amy introduced the highlights from her end of year review included with the meeting materials.

**1. Service Operations**

- Cascade Locks Deviated Fixed Route was cancelled due to low ridership
- Dial-A-Ride ridership increased by 39%
- Upper Valley decreased by 17%
- Funding has been applied for to expand Dial-A-Ride and transition Upper Valley to Fixed Route. If funding is received schedule, routes and dial-a-ride structure details will then be addressed.
- Hood River City Route ridership has increased by 16%. No service changes but increase in ridership likely related to the more passes being sold Downtown



Employee Pass Program and Gorge Transit Pass program.

- Hood River Connect service was cancelled due to low ridership.
- Gorge-To-Mountain ridership has increased by 15%. Service hours were adjusted by accommodate more night skiing and CAT has seen an increase in local ski teams using the service to get to and from practice.
- Columbia Gorge Express ridership increased by 14%. Expanded summer service started 4/27. The route typically runs seven times a day, but the summer service expansion does nine trips a day to Gateway Transit Center in Portland.

## 2. **Mobility Services**

- Gorge Transit Pass cost remains low and is good for a year from purchase. Pricing for the pass has remained low, keeping at \$40 for an adult since 2021. The Dial-A-Ride pass is \$80.
- 752 student or low-income passes were distributed
- Vanpool program launched. No businesses have signed on yet
- Downtown Employee Pass program doubled passes distributed
- Ridecatbus.org was updated to improve user experience and increase visibility of service alerts
- The Travel Trainer has increased awareness with vulnerable populations and conducted several one-on-one travel training sessions. Sara added that her services and the Gorge Transit Pass program are gaining traction through word of mouth. She also shared details on recent ride-alongs she did with seniors and high school student groups. A portion of the STIF formula funds pay for the match for the grant that pays for Sarah's time.

## 3. **Capital Projects**

- CAT has received federal funds for new buses, but they have not yet been delivered. Buses are expected this fall. CAT will be using some of the formula funds for the match requirement.

## 4. **Program Reserve**

- Program Reserve funds are restricted but can be used to cover unexpected expenses. Typically, those are additional operation expenses that are not covered by our current grants. Federal and State grants fund all of CAT's operations. CAT has local property tax funds that can be used for some of that match, but that is the only grant that we can use for that. Applications for these funds must be submitted three years before the funds become available so estimating future costs can be difficult.

The distribution of Student passes is being refined this year. CAT does attend the Back-to-School Resource Fair and The School District is now adding training for staff on how to get Gorge Passes into students hands. Amy will also be presenting at a future School District Board meeting. A pilot program for Cascade Locks youth residents has been launched giving them some small prizes for riding the Columbia Gorge Express into Hood River.



## 5. Potential STIF 25-27 Biennium Projects

We are currently in the 23-25 Biennium; this Fall, CAT will be submitting applications for the 25-27 Biennium. That will start July 1<sup>st</sup> 2025 and go on until June 30<sup>th</sup> 2027.

### Project 1: Service Operations

Task 1: Targeted service to vulnerable populations within Hood River County

- Purpose: Funds PDX Medical Shuttle Services and match for Dial-A-Ride
- Goals for FY25-27: Expand Dial-A-Ride to operate on weekends. This would allow residents of Cascade Locks, The Upper Valley and Hood River to book custom pick-up and drop-offs during the weekend, based on availability. Part of the current increase in Dial-A-Ride use is due to including Cascade Locks in the service area.

Task 2: Targeted service to vulnerable populations within Hood River County

- Purpose: Match for Hood River City, Upper Valley, Gorge-To-Mountain, Columbia Gorge Express, and Columbia Gorge Explore.
- Goals for FY25-27: Fall 2025 new Hood River City Route, transition Upper Valley to Fixed Route and expand to weekends. Add Columbia Gorge Explore service which would service trailhead and recreation focused stops but also allow transfers to Columbia Gorge Express. The demand is present to expand Columbia Gorge Express service to 9 trips per day year round.

### Project 2: Mobility Services

Task 1: Low Income and Student Fare Program

- Purpose: Funds free fare student program, and Gorge Transit Connect free and discount fares.
- Goals for FY25-27: More outreach to schools

Task 2: Vanpool and Mobility Services

- Purpose: Implement vanpool program and mobility services (bike share, car-share, etc.).
- Goals for FY25-27: Staff is on the fence about including vanpool. Insurance barriers to adding mobility services. Potential opportunity to do after hours taxi vouchers for low-income individuals instead.

Task 3: Outreach and Awareness of Services

- Purpose: Targeted outreach, marketing, and travel training to vulnerable populations. Increase community awareness of services. Match for Travel Trainer.
- Goals for FY25-27: Combine schedules to reduce brochures. Continue to grow Travel Trainer program which has been a great tool to helping community members.

### Project 3

Task 1: Capitol Expansion and Replacement

- Purpose: Match for capitol grants to purchase replacement and expansion vehicles, bus stop infrastructure, and facility expansion.
- Goals for FY25-27: Receive new Columbia Gorge Express, Gorge-To-Mountain, Dog Mountain, and Trolley buses. Purchase property for new Park & Ride and expand



transit facilities, the current park and ride area may be converted to bus storage and to make more room for maintenance facilities. CAT is currently over capacity for bus storage. Purchase and install bus stop infrastructure, including converting temporary bus stop poles to permanent bus stops, and adding numerous stops with the upcoming expansion of the City route.

**Project 4**

Task 1: Program Reserve

- Purpose: Cover unanticipated costs and additional funds to maintain service and match funds for capitol grants.
- Goals for FY25-27: Will hold these to use for match unless needed for services.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:02pm.**

The Hood River County Transportation District STIF meeting minutes are prepared and presented in summary form. Video recordings of the meetings are on file at CAT and are part of the approved minutes. If you would like to watch the recording of the meeting, please contact Tim Ravins [tim@catransit.org](mailto:tim@catransit.org), or call (541) 386-4202.

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