

GORGE REGIONAL TRANSIT STRATEGY

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District

INTRODUCTION

This Public Involvement Plan will guide stakeholder and public involvement during the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy process. The Plan describes fundamental objectives and activities that MCEDD will implement to ensure that interested parties have adequate opportunities to provide meaningful input to the process and broad outreach is conducted to reach and hear from key stakeholders and partners.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purpose of Phase I of the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy is to complete the foundational work necessary to launch a successful regional transportation strategy. Phase I will focus on strengthening partnerships and synthesizing existing local documents into a high level regional vision document, and completing related foundational assessments.

The outcomes of Phase I will determine the scope of work of Phase II, which is not yet funded. Phase II will focus on a more detailed implementation strategy including further data analysis, ridership forecasts, financial planning, and deeper operational assessments. The Mobility Manager will work to secure funding for Phase II.

Key objectives of Phase I include:

- » Serve as a Policy Bridge to ensure consistency with the relevant ODOT policies and regulations and the State Transportation Planning Rule.
- » Establish consolidated and shared regional goals for transit and set a framework for implementation. Create awareness around inconsistencies and endorsement of commonalities but will not seek to amend or revise current and adopted plans.
- » Identify, involve, and coordinate with a broad range of stakeholders including local agencies and local governments.
- » Ensure stakeholders are provided accessible opportunities to provide input through an effective public involvement process.
- » Summarize and synthesize existing local, regional, statewide public transportation plans, studies, and programs that identify goals, policies and strategies on regional transit. A memo will include individual summaries of each plan or program and a regional synthesis of consistent regional goals and objectives.
- » Coordinate public involvement and outreach events and activities with those of related planning efforts underway in the region.

- » Complete gap and capacity analysis. Key regional public transportation gaps and opportunities will be identified based on public and partner agency input and existing framework memo. Identify institutional barriers. The purpose of this analysis is to inform the regional strategy foundations memo.
- » Complete Regional Strategy Foundations Memo, including a cohesive vision and set of goals, organizational and operational options, high level funding options, and outline for Phase II of the Transit Strategy.
- » Conduct local agency briefings with the governing body of each transit agency addressed in the Memo, incorporate feedback, and present a final Regional Strategy Foundations Memo to the MCEDD Board for approval.
- » Ensure the planning process does not result in projects that have a disproportionate negative impact on Title II, Title VI, and EJ populations.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OBJECTIVES AND TOOLS

The purpose of the public involvement program is to allow public transportation stakeholders meaningful opportunities to provide input into the planning process.

Methods of engagement will include:

- » Project page on the Gorgetranslink.com website
- » Email lists for the Project Management Team and the Gorge Transit Strategy Working Group
- » Email list for interested parties
- » Gorge TransLink Alliance engagement and review of materials
- » 4 Gorge Transit Strategy Working Group Workshops
- » 4 MCEDD Transportation Administration Board meetings
- » 4 MCEDD Full Board meetings (project memos and updates)
- » Presentations to County Commissioners of Skamania, Klickitat, Wasco, Sherman counties and 1 presentation to Board of Columbia Area Transit
- » Individual meetings with key stakeholders
- » 2 Public Meetings, held at times and in locations accessible to those with disabilities as well as convenient to transportation disadvantaged populations (in coordination with other relevant public outreach events)

Public involvement and outreach events and activities will be coordinated with those of related planning efforts underway in the region. Additionally, public meetings will be scheduled and advertised in order to effectively engage transportation disadvantaged communities. This may include: advertising meetings in locations where transportation disadvantaged populations live and work, translating meeting materials, hosting child-friendly evening events, or reaching out directly to community organizations.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

There are several critical success factors that the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy should achieve.

- » Strengthen regional partnerships
- » Identify common goals and a common vision
- » Identify partner needs for increased public transportation service and funding strategies
- » Identify other key regional gaps and challenges
- » Effectively engage and be informed by regional and local stakeholders
- » Identify scope of work and funding for Phase II: Feasibility and Analysis

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An outline of responsibilities for each project team member is provided below to clarify the expected contributions from each member:

MCEDD Staff

- » The MCEDD Mobility Manager will lead the public involvement work for this project.
- » Establish and prepare Project Management Team and Working Group rosters and an "Interested Parties List" that will include parties who have expressed interest in the project, for notification of project progress, meetings and presentations.
- » Confirm that Working Group meetings include outreach to and opportunity for representatives of all interested groups, including local governments, agencies, residents, businesses, and other institutions that have a stake in public transportation.
- » Work with the Project Management Team (PMT) to arrange and conduct PMT and Working Group meetings. MCEDD Mobility Manager will arrange meeting locations and logistics. Specific responsibilities vary by meeting and are described in Table 1.
- » Provide agenda and materials for PMT and Working Group meetings one week prior to the meeting
- » Arrange, prepare material, and conduct Working Group meetings.
- » Post project updates on website and social media accounts.
- » As needed and feasible, provide Spanish translation services if needed at Working Group meetings and for individual project communications.
- » Prepare adoption meeting with MCEDD Full Board of Directors.

Project Management Team (MCEDD, ODOT, WSDOT)

- » Attend PMT and Working Group meetings.
- » Review draft memos prior to PMT and Working Group meetings.
- » Provide comments at the PMT and Working Group meetings

Gorge TransLink Alliance

- » Technical review of materials before Working Group meetings
- » Provide comments and make recommendations

Project Steering Committee: MCEDD Transportation Administration Board

- » Review staff memos prior to TAB meetings
- » Provide comments and make recommendations at the TAB meetings

Working Group Members

- » Attend Working Group meetings
- » Review memos and information packets prior to Working Group Workshops
- » Provide comments and engage in activities at the Working Group Workshops

	Jan – April 2020	May-Aug 2020	Sept-Dec 2020	Jan-March 2021	March-June 2021
MCEDD Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize WG invitees Facilitate PMT meetings Check with cities & counties on how they want to be engaged Draft PIP – pre-circulate with working group to get initial feedback prior sending draft to full group Draft & Final PIP Facilitate WG meetings Draft and Final Existing Framework Memo Update MCEDD Transportation Admin Board and Full Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft & Final Gaps & Capacity Memo Facilitate Workshops Update MCEDD Transportation Admin Board and Full Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft & Review Draft Framework Work with JLA to Facilitate Group Workshop Update MCEDD Transportation Admin Board and Full Board Gorge TransLink Alliance meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working groups #3 and #4 Gorge TransLink Alliance meetings Final Draft Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy Memo completed Gorge TransLink Alliance review TAB review Facilitate MCEDD Board adoption
PMT Calls – Prepare For workshops	First PMT meeting—Jan 8, 2020 PMT #2 Feb 2020	PMT #3-5 2020 Debrief from Working Group #1, Work with Volpe	PMT #6-8 Final Volpe meeting, Review Existing Framework memo, Prepare for Working Group #2	PMT #9-10— Prepare and Debrief: #3 Working Group meeting	PMT#11: Review of draft Final memo
Working Group Meetings	WG #1 February 19, 2020 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to process including goals & purpose of project, purpose of the TAC, schedule, Deliverable for review: Draft PIP and accept feedback Discuss local plans to be reviewed and synthesized Discuss participants who should be part of the Working Group 	Individual Interviews with MCEDD	WG #2 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Deliverable for review: Draft Existing Framework Memo Workshop: commonalities/ inconsistencies among local transit goals. Revise draft memo based on feedback.	WG #3 Deliverable for review: Gaps and Capacity Analysis WG #4 Deliverable for review: Draft Regional Strategy memo	
MCEDD Board / Exec Committee	MCEDD Board / Transportation Administration Board Updates ongoing at quarterly meetings (March, June, Sept, Dec)		MCEDD Board: Dec 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap process and findings to 	MCEDD Board review of process and materials to date	MCEDD Board: final presentation of Strategy memo for adoption

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> date Accept feedback from Board 		
Gorge TransLink Alliance and Provider Boards	Gorge TransLink Alliance meetings WG members encouraged to keep their respective boards updated throughout	Gorge TransLink Alliance review of materials Provider Board briefings	Gorge TransLink Alliance review of materials Provider Board briefings	Gorge TransLink Alliance review of materials Provider Board briefings
Public Engagement			2 Virtual Public Open House Meetings (coordinate with other meetings)	

IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS: WHO'S INVOLVED?

The public and stakeholder involvement efforts seek participation of all potentially affected and/or interested individuals, communities, and organizations. MCEDD Mobility Manager will maintain a stakeholder database that will be updated throughout the project. Stakeholders will include, but are not limited to:

- a. Local governments, including transportation and land use planners
- b. Public transportation service providers (Gorge TransLink Alliance membership)
- c. ODOT, WSDOT
- d. Regional planning entities including Metro and SW WA Regional Transportation Council
- e. Neighboring public transportation service providers; TriMet, CTran, Mt Hood Transportation Alliance, Gilliam and Wheeler counties
- f. Legislative Representatives and staff
- g. Tribal Representative
- h. Columbia River Gorge Commission
- i. State Agencies including OR and WA State Parks
- j. Tourism
- k. Local Employers
- l. Social and human service agencies, including the health care representatives who participated in the Transportation Innovations project
- m. Local and regional nonprofits
- n. Bicycle and pedestrian advocates
- o. Higher Education

DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

The Gorge Regional Transit Strategy project has several committees and bodies that will advise, recommend, and decide key outcomes. Figure 1 shows the decision-making structure.

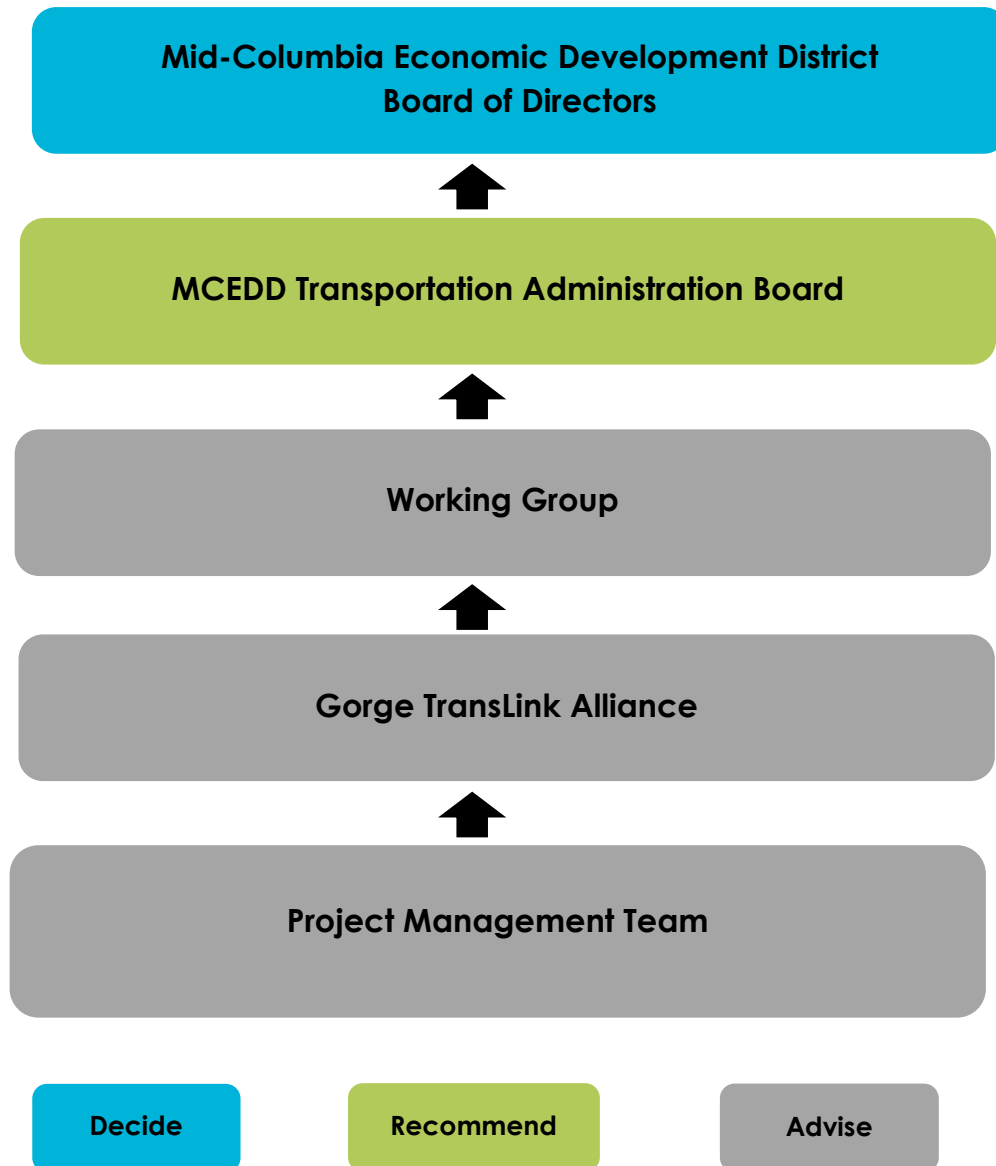


Figure 1 – Gorge Regional Transit Strategy Decision Making Structure

Decide: Mid-Columbia Economic Development District Board of Directors

The MCEDD Board of Directors will adopt the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy.

Review: Gorge TransLink Alliance

The Gorge TransLink Alliance provides subject matter expertise for review and comment on materials. Some members of the Gorge TransLink stated a preference for this review process. CAT staff stated a preference for serving on the PMT, which was also an option open to all.

Recommend: MCEDD Transportation Administration Board (TAB)

The MCEDD Board of Directors will receive recommendations from the TAB. The TAB is comprised of regional representatives from the MCEDD service area. TAB board members will provide regular updates to their respective governing bodies.

Advise: Working Group

The Gorge Transit Strategy Working Group will review memos, discuss local plans, and help to identify common goals, common gaps and challenges, and a common vision. Working Group members will provide regular updates to their agencies, leadership, or constituencies.

Project Management Team

The Project Management Team (PMT), comprised of ODOT staff, WSDOT staff, CAT staff, and MCEDD staff, will provide staff recommendations and reports to each committee and decision-making body. The PMT will be informed by technical work completed throughout the project, working group workshop outcomes, and the TAB guidance.

EXTERNAL PROJECT COMMUNICATION

The process to develop a Gorge Regional Transit Strategy will require ongoing communication and engagement with groups external to the project management team and working group. The project management team (and working group?) will rely on the following message, tools, and procedures to make this communication as effective and timely as possible.

Overall Message

The purpose of this project is to create a Regional Transit Strategy for the Columbia Gorge region. The Gorge Regional Transit Strategy is being developed in order to:

- » Strengthen regional partnerships
- » Synthesize existing local and regional public transportation plans
- » Identify the common goals that create a regional vision for transit throughout the Columbia Gorge region.
- » Identify common gaps, inconsistencies, or challenges. Identify shared opportunities.
- » Prepare a solid foundation for Phase II work: feasibility, operational, organizational, financial analysis

Collaboration with Local Agencies

MCEDD Mobility Manager will engage will local communities to:

- » Establish the Working Group members
- » Develop and maintain a project stakeholder list
- » Advertise and host Working Group Workshops
- » Keep local decision makers up-to-date with pertinent information