

# **14 - Regional Public Transportation System**

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## **Introduction**

The Regional Public Transportation System chapter provides an important means to enhance our mobility and reduce reliance on the single-occupant vehicle (SOV) through improvements to the region's public transportation system. Implementation of the recommendations contained in the Plan will help to create a system of public transportation services that provide expanded transportation options for all urban area residents, not only those whose lack of convenient access to a private automobile severely restricts their mobility.

Investments in the region's public transportation system ensure diversified mobility options within and through the SKATS area and add needed people and goods movement capacity to the regional transportation system without additional costly expansions of the highway infrastructure. Increasing the use of the public transportation system to meet our travel needs helps to maintain and improve our quality of life by reducing the volume of automobile travel and lessening the impact of transportation on air and water quality, the natural environment, and energy consumption. As a result, public transportation services in the SKATS area constitute an important alternative to the single-occupant vehicle and contribute significantly to improving our overall mobility and maintaining our quality of life.

## **The Regional Public Transportation System**

The regional public transportation system consists of all transportation services in the SKATS area generally available to the public. Although rideshare matching and transportation demand management programs could also be considered part of the public transportation system, these two activities are discussed in the Regional Transportation Systems Efficiency Management Element (Chapter 13).

The six major types of transportation systems/services available to the public in the SKATS area addressed in this element involve ground transportation consisting of:

- Mass transit service (Cherriots);
- ADA/elderly-related transportation services;
- intercity bus service;
- intercity rail service;
- regular/shared taxi and limo services; and
- charter bus service.

## Mass Transit Service

### *Overview*

The Salem Area Mass Transit District (Cherriots) was established under Oregon Revised Statute 267 by vote on November 6, 1979. The service area for the district is the Salem-Keizer Urban Growth Boundary. The district is governed by a seven-member board of directors, which is elected by residents in each of the seven subdistricts.

### *The Fleet*

For the year 2006, the mass transit system employed approximately 188 employees and utilized a fleet of over 79 buses that log roughly 2,900,000 miles and approximately 166,000 total vehicle revenue hours per year. Each bus has a seating capacity of 25 to 45 riders with standing room for up to 30 more passengers. All buses are equipped with front mounted bicycle racks that can carry up to two bicycles. Since 1998, the district has added over 44 low-floor, natural gas powered buses to its fleet. The advantages of these buses are two-fold: they allow easy boarding and alighting for all passengers, including those with physical disabilities, and they reduce the amount of pollution that is typically emitted by traditional diesel powered buses. The district needs to replace six to eight buses each year to meet federal guidelines regarding fleet replacement

### *Route System and Ridership*

The Cherriots fixed route system is primarily a radial "pulse" route structure in which all but six of the twenty-five routes converge in a timed fashion at the central transit station located in downtown Salem. Five of the six routes that do not come into downtown operate in West Salem as "neighborhood circulators" or "feeder" routes connecting to a "corridor" or "trunk" route that is set up to work with the downtown "pulse." Passengers traveling between any two points in the service area can reach their destinations by making a timed transfer at the downtown transit station or the West Salem station. The sixth route, a nonradial route, provides "crosstown" service between the city of Keizer and the East Salem and Lancaster Drive area. Lancaster Drive is heavily strip-developed and contains much of the retail and employment activity located outside of the Salem downtown/mall core area. There are also three park-and-ride routes, one through South Salem with park-and-ride lots on South Commercial and one in East Salem with a park-and-ride lot on Hawthorne at Market Street. These two routes operate Monday through Friday from approximately 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and from 4:45 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. The third park-and-ride route is on Airport Road south of State Street and operates Monday through Friday from approximately 6:15 a.m. to 6:06 p.m.

Cherriots buses operate from 6:15 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. weekdays and from around 7:00 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. on Saturdays. The system operates on frequencies ranging from 15 to 60 minutes. Most of the nineteen "pulse" routes are timed to arrive/depart the downtown transit station at either 15 or 45 after the hour. The five West Salem "feeder" routes arrive/depart the West Salem station around the hour and half-hour. The majority of routes are on half-hour frequency in the peak periods and hit both pulses. In the midday, seven routes drop to hourly frequency, with most of these hitting the :45 pulse. Twelve routes serving the major radial corridors

remain on half-hour service throughout the day. Bus fares as of November 1, 2006 are \$1.00 for adults, \$0.75 for children and \$0.50 for seniors.

As of 2006, the transit system provides approximately 90 transit miles per trip, serving 19,000 average daily riders along 7,600 average daily transit miles. Ridership has been increasing steadily since 1985. Approximately 50 percent of the riders are commuters, the largest segment being state employees, and 25 percent are students ranging from grade school through Chemeteka Community College students. The majority of the remaining 25 percent consists of senior citizens and disabled riders. According to Census data from 2000 for the Salem Urbanized Area, approximately 1.9 percent of the total work trips used public transportation. See **Table B-3** in Appendix B for ridership information.

### *The Regional Mass Transit Route System*

The Regional Mass Transit System consists of a radial system of regionally significant transit (trunk) routes that provide the backbone of the overall public transit system (**Map 14-1**). All of the streets used by the Regional Transit System routes are also designated as Regional Major Arterials on the Regional Highway Functional Classification System (see Chapter 15). Specific routes have been included as part of the identified Regional Mass Transit System for the following reasons:

- They provide service in the major commercial corridors in the region and carry the highest passenger volumes. These routes generally form a radial system providing a direct path between the downtown transit station and the outlying neighborhoods. Much of the projected employment growth in the SKATS area will occur as infill in downtown Salem and along the existing commercial corridors. In addition to employment activities, these commercial corridors also generate most of the shopping, errand, and service trips in the region. The nonradial portion of the regional system provides service along Lancaster Drive, the major commercial corridor in the region.
- They provide service to major regional activity centers. These activity centers, such as the Lancaster Mall, are focused concentrations of activities that create substantial transportation demand on the regional transportation system.
- The region's park-and-ride facilities are served by the regional routes, in addition to express buses running in the peak hours that make a minimum number of stops. Park-and-ride facilities need to be located on routes that provide frequent transit service during peak hours and connect to the Downtown/Capitol Mall employment core.

The Regional Mass Transit System is intended to provide high quality service (i.e., speed, frequency) and carry the highest passenger volumes. Thirteen other, more "local" routes extend from the major trunk route system and serve neighborhood areas. The regional mass transit route system is depicted in **Map 14-1** along with the regional activity centers and park-and-ride lots.

### *Major Transit Stops*

Major transit stops are locations that serve as either an origin or destination for a sizable fraction of a route's riders, or that represent the confluence of several bus routes with the ability to transfer between the routes. These are locations where the amenities, such as covered waiting areas, for riders either already exist or should be provided. The current regional major transit stops are:

Courthouse Square  
Glen Creek Transit Station  
Chemeketa Community College  
Lancaster Mall

Several future regional major transit stops have been identified during the update to the RTSP process by the transit district. These proposed stops are meant to be representational of the location where a future major stop would be located, and should not be construed as representing a final location. Final location of mini-transit centers will be determined through a process carried out by the transit district.

South Salem: Madrona at Commercial St S.  
Keizer: Chemawa at N. River Rd

### *Weekday Transit Service*

Almost all of the routes in the Regional Transit System have 30-minute headways during the peak hours (6:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.). Lancaster Drive south of D Street to State Street has 60-minute headways during the peak hours. During the midday (10:15 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.), approximately two-thirds of the regional routes provide 30-minute headways and the other one-third provides 60-minute headways. D Street east of Summer Street and Lancaster Drive north of D Street has 15-minute service all day connecting Chemeketa Community Collage to downtown Salem. Center Street has 15-minute headways all day because it is served by two routes with offsetting 30-minute headways. Three other routes provide 15-minute headways to the peak hours (6:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.): Route #1 along South Commercial Street from the Battle Creek area to downtown, Route #9 along Broadway and River Road North connecting Keizer to Salem's downtown, and Route #16 along State Street between downtown and Lancaster Drive and along Lancaster Drive south of State Street.

### *Weekend Transit Service*

Saturday service for most of the Regional Transit System provides 60-minute headways. There is currently no Sunday transit service.

### *ADA/Elderly-Related Transportation Services*

ADA/elderly-related transportation services in the Salem-Keizer area consist of Cherriots fixed route accessible (lift-equipped) service, dial-a-ride service, and other social/health related special transportation services. These services are organized and/or operated by public agencies, social agencies, and private companies. Transportation services like these

complement conventional transit service by meeting the needs of special groups of travelers, and helping to make more efficient use of existing transportation resources.

Provision of transportation services for elderly and disabled persons in the Salem-Keizer area is a significant component of the transit district's planning and operating efforts. The District has been operating its ADA paratransit program – CherryLift – since January 1997. Ridership has grown from the 160 trips made in the first month, to an average of 9,500 trips per month today (2006). This program has an operating cost of approximately \$1,800,000 annually, and is supported by Salem Transit District general funds.

### ***Cherriots Fixed Route Accessible Service***

All of the transit buses are lift-equipped and have wheelchair positions and securement systems. As mentioned earlier, the district has begun to purchase new CNG buses with the low floor design, which eliminates the need for wheelchair lifts. A hydraulic lift can lower the floor to curb level or lower. The fixed-route services carry approximately 60,000 elderly (over 60 years old) or disabled riders annually. No fare is charged for this service, but donations on a per-ride basis are accepted. There is not set minimum response time. Trips are scheduled on a space-available basis, right up to real-time if possible.

### ***Dial-a-Ride Services***

Dial-a-ride services are considered demand-responsive public transportation and offer more freedom from fixed route and schedule constraints. Routes are determined dynamically by current demand with no specific schedule followed. Dial-a-ride services in the Salem-Keizer area are provided for the disabled and elderly. A person or group of people can summon an on-call taxi or van to take them to their destinations with certain hours of the day.

"Wheels" is a nonprofit dial-a-ride program offered by Oregon Housing and Associated Services, Inc. providing paratransit services in the urban portion of the SKATS area. In 2003-04, Wheels operated with fourteen 18-passenger vans, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The service provided 60,185 rides for elderly and disabled people during 2003-04, and is primarily funded through State Special Transportation Funds (STF) from cigarette taxes. Wheels also has a contract with Marion County to provide transportation to work sites and group homes for 140 clients.

In January 1997, the Salem Area Mass Transit District added its ADA "Cherrylift" program. This program provides dial-a-ride services to disabled persons who are unable to use regular Cherriots bus service. Cherrylift gives disabled residents equal access to public transportation. In 2005-06, the service provided 111,321 trips.

### ***Regional Brokerage System (TripLink)***

A tri-county Medicaid brokerage was developed and implemented during the summer of 2003. TripLink provides transportation services for Medicaid eligible clients for medical related transportation needs. Approximately 35 private providers, both profit and non-profit offer transportation services using 150 vehicles and 350 drivers. The brokerage currently provides approximately 13,000 trips per month. A regional transportation software program is supplied

to the providers, enabling them to capture their daily trip manifests and to bill their trips electronically. Clients from Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties access the brokerage through the use of a 1-800 phone line. Of the 13,000 trips provided each month, about 2,000 are given fixed route bus passes and an additional 2,000 are provided grouped trips.

### ***Specialized Transportation Service Provision***

In 2007, the transit district adopted a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan (“SAMTD *Specialized Transportation Plan*”) that contains recommendations for enhancing regional mobility, for both the general public but especially for the transportation disadvantaged population in the region. The plan includes recommendations to modify and improve CARTS services to and between the urban and rural areas of Marion and Polk counties; improve information, education, marketing and outreach about the range of transportation providers and services; and enhance coordination between existing transit service providers and limited participation by human service providers.

### ***Other Social/Health Related Special Transportation Services***

Throughout the Salem-Keizer area there are many small, client-oriented nonprofit organizations providing transportation primarily for the disabled and seniors. Some of these organizations and businesses also provide housing and vocational opportunities for their clients such as Catholic Community Services and Shangri-La. Transportation destinations include work sites, home, activities, and errands.

Catholic Community Services provides transportation services for 25 physically and/or mentally disabled clients at six group homes. Currently, they have five vans that can carry four to six passengers. They also provide services in 15 supported living sites, which are housing situations in leased homes or apartments with one or two people. Another five vehicles provide service for these clients. There are four employment sites that use five vehicles for business-related transportation.

Shangri-La provides transportation services for 150 to 200 physically and/or mentally disabled clients at 16 group homes. They have 16 vans each with a capacity of four to six passengers. Shangri-La clients also utilize "Wheels", taxis, and the Cherriots bus.

There are about 20 other nonprofit transportation providers in the Salem-Keizer area that are associated with retirement centers, Boys & Girls Clubs, and hospitals.

## **Intercity Bus Service**

Intercity bus service is an important component of the region's public transportation system and is the principal alternative to the single-occupancy vehicle for regional travel. Many residents unable to drive rely on intercity bus service for travel to destinations outside the SKATS area. Providers of intercity bus travel include both private companies and public agencies. The private companies focus on longer travel, providing either service across state lines, as in the case of Greyhound Lines; or connecting smaller cities with Portland; or linking central Oregon or the Coast with the communities in the Willamette Valley. The intercity bus service providers target people making non-commuting trips between areas or cities. The public agencies usually tailor their service to address the work commuter trip.

Greyhound Lines, the major intercity interstate bus carrier, is the only carrier currently providing this service in the region. Greyhound Lines operates a bus station on Church Street in downtown Salem. As of 2001, there are seven southbound buses departing the station on a daily basis. Some of these buses stop in Albany, Corvallis, Eugene, and other cities along the I-5 corridor. There are seven northbound buses all of which terminate in Portland. At the Portland bus station, patrons can transfer to buses going further north or east. In 2004, Greyhound cut service to many of the smaller communities it served as a cost-cutting measure.

Smaller bus companies are now the exclusive providers of service to some of the smaller cities. Through the use of interline agreements, Greyhound Lines coordinates its service with smaller bus companies. For example, Valley Retriever provides connecting service in Albany for patrons traveling east to Bend. In Corvallis, patrons can transfer to a connecting Valley Retriever bus in order to go west to Newport. As part of the interline agreement, patrons purchase one ticket even though two different bus companies are involved in the journey.

As of 2006, there are several public agencies providing regularly scheduled intercity transit service serving the Salem-Keizer area. The combination of these three providers services enables the majority of communities within Marion and Polk counties, as well as those along the I-5 corridor to the north and south to be connected with the Salem-Keizer area.

## **CARTS**

The Chemeketa Area Regional Transportation System (CARTS) provides the regional planning and support of transportation services for the communities outside the Salem-Keizer urbanized area in Marion and Polk counties. The Board is comprised of commissioners from Marion and Polk counties, and the Salem-Keizer Transit District. CARTS provides weekday public transit for elderly/disabled persons as well as the general public, linking the two counties and their communities with Salem and Keizer. CARTS serves Dallas, Monmouth, Independence, Rickreall, and Falls City in Polk County. In Marion County, service is divided into a north county area and a south county area, also referred to as the Santiam Canyon. The north county route serves Brooks, Gervais, Woodburn, Hubbard, Mt. Angel, Silverton, Central Howell, and Chemeketa Community College in Salem. The Santiam Canyon route serves Turner, Aumsville, Stayton, Sublimity, Lyons, Mehama, Mill City, and Gates. This route also serves the airport and Amtrak station in Salem. CARTS provided some 12,000 trips per month in 2004.

Two types of services are offered: point-deviated fixed routes and a dial-a-ride service. Point-deviated fixed routes operate on a regular schedule with some additional time added to deviate  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile to pick up clients who are unable to access the regular route stops. The  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile deviations meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. CARTS provides the Dial-A-Ride service throughout rural areas in Marion and Polk counties. Clients can call from one day to two weeks in advance to schedule individual rides and receive curb-to-curb transportation service.

CARTS receives a variety of state and federal transportation funds that support both the capital needs (e.g., purchasing and maintaining vehicles) and the operation of the program. Included are funding sources such as the Special Transportation Fund (STF) and Special Transportation Grant (STG) administered by the state of Oregon, and the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) (FTA 5316), New Freedom (FTA 5317) and FTA programs 5310 and 5311 administered by the federal government. In addition to these and the fares paid by the riders, CARTS is

seeking funding from foundations to support the continued running and expansion of this program.

### **SMART**

Service between Wilsonville and Salem is provided by SMART (South Metro Area Rapid Transit) and the transit district. SMART runs two northbound and two southbound buses during the morning peak periods and three southbound and three northbound buses during the afternoon peak period. The transit district operates two buses, both southbound and northbound, in both the morning and afternoon peak periods. Service is available between the Wilsonville city hall and the Courthouse Square transit center. While this service is mainly targeted at workers commuting between Wilsonville and Salem-Keizer, SMART does provide a link to the rest of the Portland Metropolitan area with its service to the Barbur Transit Center in Portland, where it meets several Tri-Met bus routes. The Salem-Keizer transit district trips, which started in fiscal year 2002-03, target work trips in the opposite direction of the previously existing SMART service and is funded by JARC (Jobs Access Reverse Commute) formula funds.

### ***Oregon Thruway Bus***

The Oregon Department of Transportation contracts with private companies to provide Amtrak Thruway bus service to connect areas of the State with the Willamette Valley. While the service termination station is in Portland, at Union Station where guaranteed connections to Amtrak trains are provided, many of the buses stop in Salem. The I-5 corridor between Ashland and Portland, stopping in Salem at the Salem Railroad Station, provides service while it is not financially feasible to operate trains. Buses in this corridor are used to supplement the existing *Cascade* passenger train service that is offered. Currently, daily Thruway service is provided for travel on the I-5 corridor by two northbound and two southbound buses. Additional Thruway service connects Bend and Central and Eastern Oregon with Salem and the I-5 corridor. Several communities on the Coast, including Newport, are also linked with the Salem-Keizer area.

### **Intercity Rail Service**

The Salem Railroad Station is located on 12th Street just north of Mission Street on the downtown fringe. Amtrak provides the SKATS area with two train service options, the *Coast Starlight* and *Cascades* trains. The *Cascades* line offers two daily round-trip trains between Eugene and Seattle. The *Coast Starlight* train operates through the Willamette Valley on a daily basis as part of its Los Angeles-to-Seattle service.

A more detailed report on passenger rail service, including rail and station infrastructure, ridership, planned improvements, and funding can be found in the Regional Rail System Chapter (Chapter 11).

### **Regular and Shared Taxi/Limo Services**

Other passenger transportation services available in the Salem-Keizer area include four taxi companies, an airport shuttle service (shared taxi) and numerous limousine services. The Regional Rideshare Program (and other transportation demand management services) are discussed in the Regional Transportation Systems Efficiency Management Element, Chapter 13.

### *Regular Taxi*

Taxis provide a high degree of passenger flexibility and convenience but at a far higher cost per passenger than traditional transit service. There are four regular taxi services operating in the Salem-Keizer area on a 24-hour basis. Salem-Keizer Yellow Cab Company has a fleet of 20 taxicabs. A-Cab Taxi Transportation Services has a fleet of seven taxicabs and in 2002 served approximately 200 people per day. The Blue Jay Cab Company has a fleet of eight taxicabs and Cherry City Taxi has a fleet of four vehicles.

### *Shared Taxi and Limo Services*

Shuttles and shared taxis are often found at airports, train stations, and other points of major passenger concentration. The Hut Airport Shuttle, located within the terminal at McNary Field (Salem Airport), provides ground transportation to and from Portland International Airport. Home/business pick up is also available in the Salem-Keizer area via one of the five 24-passenger buses. As of 2002, the passenger vans are operating 18 trips per day between the two airports.

Within the Salem-Keizer area there are approximately 17 limousine services, most of which operate 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Many of the limousine services offer service to Portland International Airport.

### *Charter Bus Service*

Two charter bus services operating in the region provide commuter transportation service between cities along the I-5 corridor.

Betty's To and Fro provides round-trip service for commuters between Salem and Eugene, and between Salem, Corvallis, and Albany. In Salem, the 46-passenger bus stops at the Capitol Mall, downtown Salem and State Street near the State Forestry Department. In Eugene, the bus stops at the Gateway Mall. The bus services two park-and-ride lots in Corvallis and an additional park-and-ride lot in Albany.

Evergreen Stage Lines leases a 47-passenger bus and two 14-passenger vans to a commuter club for service between Portland and Salem. The bus makes many stops in Salem and Portland.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

### **Public Mass Transit (Cherriots)**

**Goal 1:**      **Develop and maintain a public transit system that is conveniently accessible to all Salem-Keizer urban area residents.**

*Objective 1:*    *Provide transit service throughout the urbanized portions of the Salem-Keizer area.*

**Policy 1:**      Ensure, as practicable, that all residents and major employers in the Salem-Keizer area have transit service within 1/4 mile walking distance.

**Goal 2: Develop and maintain a public transportation system that provides convenient access for a variety of trip destinations and purposes.**

*Objective 1:* Provide a mix of service types that serve a full range of trip needs.

*Objective 2:* Provide a diverse system of transit routes that ensures convenient accessibility to destinations throughout the urban area with a minimum of transfers.

*Objective 3:* Provide a convenient system of transfer opportunities within the urban area to facilitate timely and convenient access to a wide variety of destinations.

**Policy:** Support the development and implementation of a public transit route system and support facilities that effectively combine appropriate elements of circulator routes, corridor routes, transit centers, and circumferential service.

**Goal 3: Develop and maintain a public transportation system that serves travel needs over a variety of times of day and days of the week.**

*Objective 1:* Provide transit service for area residents that operates over an appropriately diverse time frame.

**Policy 1:** Support prudent, incremental extensions in the hours and days of operation of the transit system.

**Goal 4: Facilitate increasing levels of ridership on the public transit system.**

*Objective 1:* Increase overall daily ridership of the transit system.

**Policy 1:** Support effective marketing and responsiveness to consumer needs of transit services in the region.

**Policy 2:** Include transit operations in the design of street infrastructure and land use developments wherever practicable.

*Objective 2:* Increase the percentage of journey to work trips made by transit in the Salem-Keizer area.

**Policy:** Support the implementation of regionwide transportation system efficiency management strategies and activities (such as employer subsidized bus pass programs) that encourage the diversion of commute trips away from the single-occupant vehicle onto the public transportation system.

**Goal 5: Develop and maintain a system of public transit routes that provides efficient, competitive service in the regional transit corridors.**

*Objective 1:* Provide an efficient and convenient system of public transit services in the regional travel corridors.

**Policy 1:** Encourage preferential transit treatments, transit-related facility improvements, and appropriate transit-supportive land uses and development along the regional transit corridors.

**Policy 2:** Support incremental increases in the frequency and capacity of service in the regional transit corridors as warranted by demand.

**Goal 6: Develop and maintain affordable transit service throughout the urban area.**

*Objective 1:* Develop and implement funding strategies that provide adequate, long-term, stable revenue source(s) for the public transportation system.

**Policy 1:** Support regional efforts to identify and implement transit funding strategies and programs that will provide adequate, long-term, stable revenue source(s) for the public transportation system.

*Objective 2:* To maintain a system of transit fares that balance the need for passenger revenues with the goal of maximizing ridership.

**Policy 1:** Support ongoing review and analysis of farebox revenues, ridership levels, and service costs to optimize the transit fare structure.

## **ADA/Elderly-Related Services**

**Goal 1: Convenient, economical, and safe transportation services for the disabled and elderly residents of the Salem-Keizer area.**

*Objective 1:* Consistent with the adopted Salem Area Transit District (SATD) Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Transit Plan Update, provide transportation services which adequately meet the needs of the elderly and disabled populations in the region.

**Policy 1:** Support the continued development and implementation of accessible fixed-route and appropriate complementary paratransit services which are identified in the adopted SATD ADA Transit Plan as updated.

## **Intercity Bus and Rail Service**

**Goal 1: An integrated transportation system that provides convenient service in the interregional and interstate corridors.**

**Policy 1:** Support public and private efforts to develop and implement appropriate expansions of bus and rail service, including commuter rail, between the Salem-Keizer area and locations outside the region.

## **Recommended Improvements to the Regional Public Transportation System**

Some of the public transportation services in the Salem-Keizer area, such as intercity bus service, charter bus service, regular and shared taxi service, and most of the social/health related special transportation services, are privately owned and operated. As a result, improvements to these services will likely occur as a result of market forces rather than by government policy initiatives at the regional and/or local levels. Most of the recommended improvements listed below pertain to transportation services owned and operated by public or quasi-public agencies such as the public transit system and intercity rail service.

Mass transit is a critical component of the region's strategy for meeting mobility needs. The transit system cannot accommodate everyone's travel needs, but it is essential to provide service that comprises a viable and effective alternative to single-occupant vehicle travel. Increased use of transit serves to reduce traffic volume, which in turn lessens energy consumption, eases congestion, mitigates the need for roadway expansion projects, and decreases vehicle emissions. Furthermore, transit equalizes travel opportunity by providing an option to those for whom auto use is restricted.

Transit service has long been available in the Salem-Keizer region, but transit use has not been supported by resources comparable to those used to accommodate automobile demand. To develop its potential, we must make additional investments in improved transit service and facilities. In addition, there must be changes in the institutional arrangements that affect transit operation, more incentives to encourage people to travel by transit, and policies that foster "transit-friendly" land use patterns.

The transit improvements called for in the RTSP cannot all be implemented at once. Marketing, education, and incentive programs must also precede and accompany major investments in transit expansion and improvements in order to effectively encourage a shift from the automobile, and expenditures should be predicated on the likelihood of successful operations.

## **Recommended Improvements to the Regional Mass Transit System**

Emerging public policy and increasing demand for transit services support expansion of the mass transit system as the required resources become available. Some of these improvements are aimed at addressing anticipated future demand. As a result, many of these recommendations will not be considered until demand warrants and funding becomes

available. These recommendations fall into two basic tiers: continuation of existing services, and service improvements/expansions. The Plan recommendations are as follows:

### *Continuation of Existing Mass Transit Service Levels*

Given the relative importance of *reliability* in transit services when travelers are considering riding a bus to work or school, for example, it is important that current services be continued where demand exists and that equipment be replaced when needed. The following recommendations are aimed at addressing such concerns.

- Maintain existing transit service levels as demand warrants and funding allows.
- Adequately maintain all existing transit vehicles, equipment, and facilities to ensure reliability, convenience, and safety.
- Replace older transit vehicles in a timely manner with a preference to clean fuel vehicles.

### *Transit Service Improvements/Expansions*

The following recommendations are aimed at making transit services a realistic alternative to the automobile and attracting additional ridership. Where possible, general estimates of the costs of these improvements are provided.

- Convert the current radial pulse system into a system of neighborhood circulators that feed into outlying transit centers connected by high-frequency corridor routes. This new system, called the “3C” system, allows for greater flexibility and efficiency in matching the mobility needs of the community over the next 20 years.
- Develop transit centers in east and south Salem and in Keizer following the model implemented in west Salem.
- Increase the frequency of service in the regional transit corridors to 15 minutes throughout the day and 30 minutes during the evening and weekend periods as warranted by demand. It is estimated that this improvement will cost approximately \$4 million per year above existing operational costs. In addition, approximately 15 more buses will be needed at a cost of almost \$5 million. The District has increased headways on four routes and hopes to improve headways on five more by 2010.
- Extend service by providing transit service on Sundays. This improvement will cost approximately \$1.1 million per year above current operational costs if provided at the same level as the existing Saturday service.
- Develop express bus service as demand warrants and funding allows. One example could be half-hour arterial park-and-ride express service on five routes during peak hours (6:30 to 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.) and hourly express service to 9:15 p.m. It is estimated that this improvement will cost approximately \$800,000 per year above

existing operational costs. In addition, approximately five more buses will be needed at a cost of roughly \$1,600,000.

- Develop timed-transfer opportunities, such as mini-hubs, where appropriate to make service more convenient and increase ridership.
- Develop a circulator service in the downtown Salem core area.
- Develop cross-town service, as feasible, to support trips not going through downtown.
- Encourage the placement of passenger amenities at regular intervals, and particularly at regional activity centers. Comfortable waiting areas at transit stops, appropriate for year-round weather conditions, greatly improve the experience of the transit rider. Basic passenger amenities at bus stops include bus stop signs, benches, and lighting. Major transit stops usually are located at higher ridership activity points and additionally should include sheltered areas, bike racks, passenger information displays, telephones, drinking fountains, landscaping, and refuse containers.
- Pursue the full implementation of transit and paratransit services called for in the transit district's ADA plan.
- Continue to support the development and marketing of TDM and public transit services to the community.
- Develop special transit programs and incentives where appropriate to make service more convenient and increase ridership.
- Development of a "High Priority Transportation Corridor" should be considered on segments of the regional route system where practicable.

In addition, transit ITS applications may have some promise in terms of increasing the efficiency of transit operations and customer confidence in the transit system. Improving mobility in regional transportation corridors where the physical and political impediments to adding right-of-way are high is identified as an "outstanding issue" in this RTSP Update. As part of the High Priority Transportation Corridor study, transit ITS applications will be examined as part of an overall recommended strategy to improve mobility in the selected corridor. The results from this study will serve as a template to guide transit ITS and other mobility improvements in other congested and constrained regional transportation corridors.

## **Recommended Improvements to Other Public Transportation Services**

- Support continued funding of the *Cascades* Intercity Amtrak Rail Service and Thruway Bus Service.
- Support the continued funding and operation of CARTS in linking Salem-Keizer with the communities of Marion and Polk counties.

- Support efforts to fund rail improvements outlined in the 1994 Oregon High Speed Rail Capacity Analysis.
- Support efforts to investigate clean air modifications to the Salem-Keizer School District's bus fleet.
- Support efforts to fund acquisition of modern passenger trainsets by ODOT for operation in the Willamette Valley portion of the Eugene to Vancouver, B.C. "Cascadia" corridor.
- Support the continuation of and enhancement of intercity bus service in the region, especially in the east-west corridors, including interline agreements with the smaller bus companies.

## Outstanding Issues

The major difficulty involved in expanding the Public Transportation System is a lack of ongoing, stable funding for significant increases in the level and type of transit services provided in the region. The mass transit system, the passenger rail system, and the ADA/Elderly and Handicapped systems all require additional levels of funding to be maximally effective.

The Union Street Railroad Bridge is currently (2006) a funded and scheduled project to convert the existing structure into a pedestrian and bicycle facility. It will provide a safe and convenient link between Wallace Marine Park and west Salem to the Riverfront Park, the central business district, and the rest of Salem. Possible further conversion of the bridge into one being usable by transit and/or emergency vehicles will require further study and outreach to both the public and the nearby businesses. Such a conversion would likely be made in the long-term, while the bridge would function as a bicycle and pedestrian facility in the near-term.

## Mass Transit System Funding Shortfall

The transit district can be expected to be able to afford necessary capital improvements (new buses and equipment) over the next 24 years but cannot afford to provide significant expansions of transit levels of service beyond those called for in this Plan without renewed or additional sources of funding (see Chapter 5, Finance). Securing stable and continuing sources of adequate operations funding for the mass transit system is critical to the ability of the overall regional transportation system to function effectively, and is a high regional priority. In the near term, in cooperation with the transit district, SKATS and the other jurisdictions in the region will cooperatively seek to identify, evaluate, and recommend appropriate new funding sources for transit operations to the region's citizenry and businesses.

## Regional Passenger Rail Facility and Service Funding

The region will continue to work with ODOT to secure the necessary funding to maintain and improve the Regional Passenger Rail System. Stable, long-term funding for operating and

maintaining the Salem Railroad station has not been identified. This is crucial to allow this vital piece of the transportation system infrastructure to function as ridership increases as a result of increased service.

### **Intercity Bus Service**

The feasibility of, and an operating and financial plan for, an ongoing intercity bus service, particularly to the west and east, connecting the Salem-Keizer urban area with cities in Polk and Marion counties, needs to be evaluated. The region will work with county staff to develop and conduct such a feasibility study as funds are available.

### **ADA/Elderly and Handicapped-Related Services Funding Shortfall**

The District is meeting the demand currently. But in the foreseeable future the level of service will grow faster than available funding. As a result of this fact the District will have to pursue additional funding.